

# Book Reports

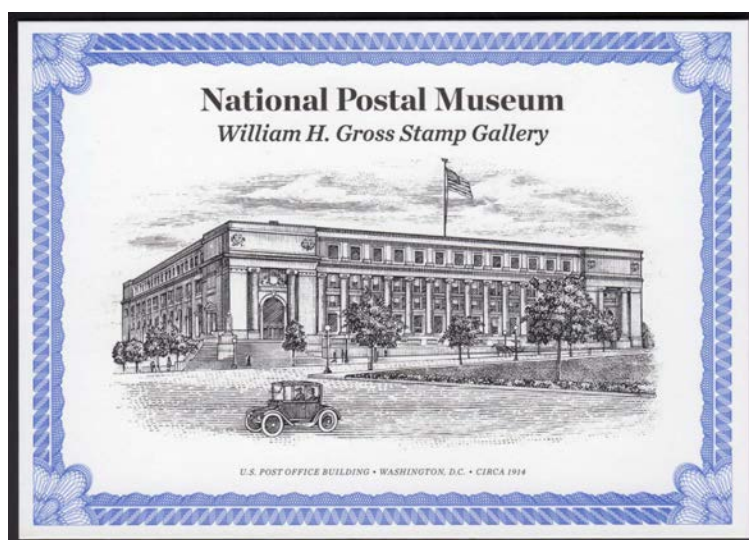
WINTER 2017 Volume 14, Issue 1



## STAMPS DELIVER KNOWLEDGE

### A Visit to the National Postal Museum

Greg Alexander



Last fall I had an opportunity for a quick visit to Washington, DC on my way to see family in Richmond, VA. Since I was traveling to Richmond by train, via Union Station and had several hours of layover, I decided to check out a site I had long been wanting to see: the National Postal Museum.

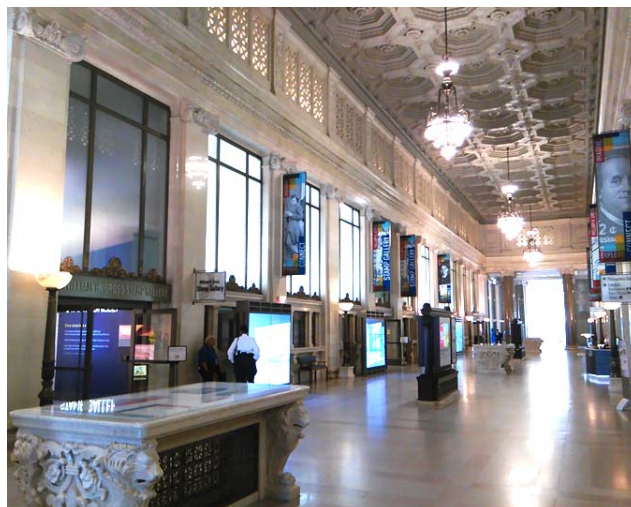
Situated in the old City Post Office Building, built in 1914, the NPM is right next to Union Station, just a 100 foot walk

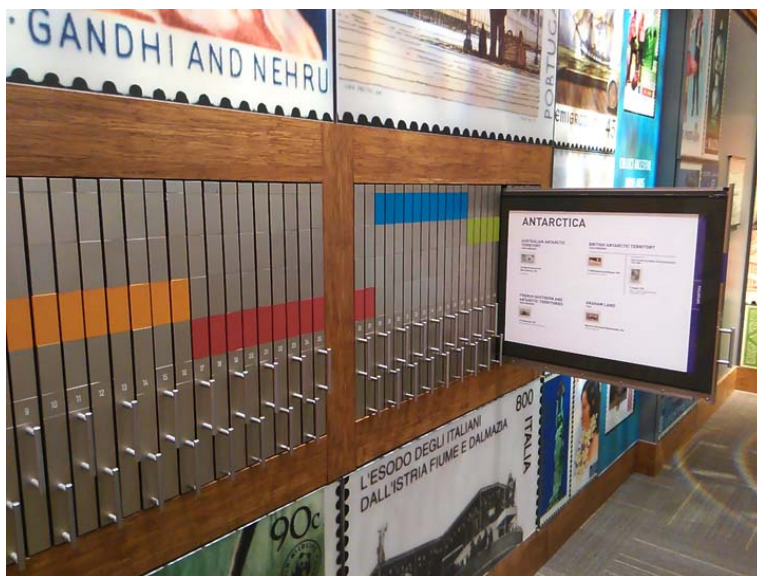
across First Street. Like all other Smithsonian museums, admission is free. But like many other DC facilities, you have to pass through a security screening.

Upstairs, the lobby, with its ornate ceiling and architecture, still has several banks of original post office boxes and service windows. Off the main corridor is the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery. The gallery serves as the repository for some of the rarest and most valuable philatelic material in the world. It also showcases representative stamps from every continent, including Antarctica.

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To use space efficiently, stamps and covers are displayed in sliding panels, organized by colored tabs. Philatelists will note the similarity to exhibit frames seen at major stamp shows. That is effectively what they are, but the world-class exhibits remain available long-term. The museum periodically rotates their material; when I was there special exhibits included Russian Local Posts, a topical collection of Music on Stamps, and postal history from Napoleonic Italy.

The rarities are more prominently displayed. More than one Inverted Jenny can be seen, along with other major errors. The unique British Guiana One-Cent Magenta is featured in a showcase at the center of the gallery until November of this year.

Surrounded by exhibits in the gallery is the National Stamp Salon, an area where visitors can actually examine and take home some stamps (think Kiloware Night). The salon also houses the National Stamp Collection and many impressive U.S. issues can be viewed in sliding frames here, in addition to postal history from well before the age of stamps.

Because 2016 was the National Parks Centennial, various related philatelic displays were scattered throughout the building. One of the most eye-catching was a full sheet of 200 Scott 760, the imperf 5¢ 1934 National Parks issue, autographed by FDR.



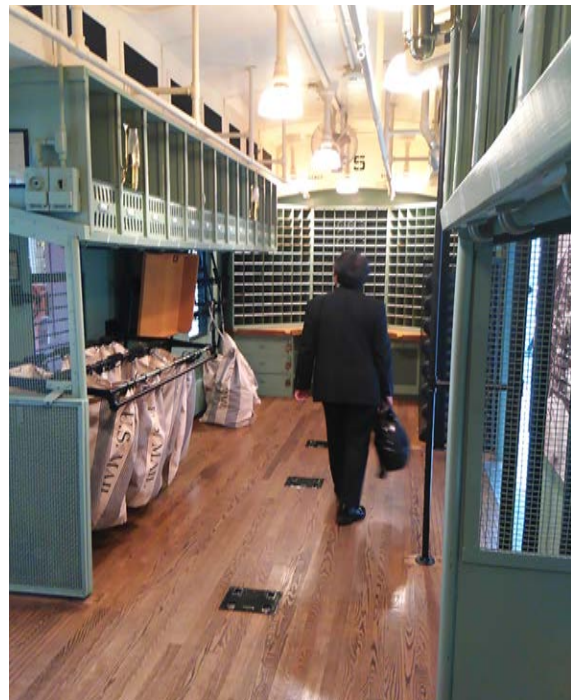


An escalator ride to the basement level brings visitors to the larger permanent museum showpieces. (Look for a statue of Owney, the famous mail dog from the 1890s, at the top of the escalator ... then look for Owney himself down below, stuffed and wearing his vest of many tags.) Here the history of the postal service is physically represented, from a walk through a Colonial post route to the Pony Express to more urban mail wagons. In the atrium, the actual modes of mail transit are on view: several mail planes and mail trucks, a stagecoach, and a railway post office car. This last is set up with mailbags, sorting slots, and a video loop with veteran RPO postal clerks explaining how the process worked.



There's one more secret you should know if you plan to visit. The postal museum is one of the last spots in DC that still has self-serve coin-operated lockers. Too small for full-sized suitcases, the lockers will fit most overhead luggage -- and for 25¢ they are the best deal in town. You'll find them on the lower level past the statue of Ben Franklin. Just drop your excess baggage and do a little sightseeing. But don't forget to get back before closing time!

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# Periodical Review: The United States Specialist

Don Overstreet

Your Northwest Philatelic Library has a number of focus areas where we maintain extensive reference and research material. When the library was founded as a distinct entity, it was decided that the broad category of the United States would receive particular attention. Perhaps one of the most significant publications we subscribe to is *The United States Specialist*, a periodical that has been in continuous publication since 1930.

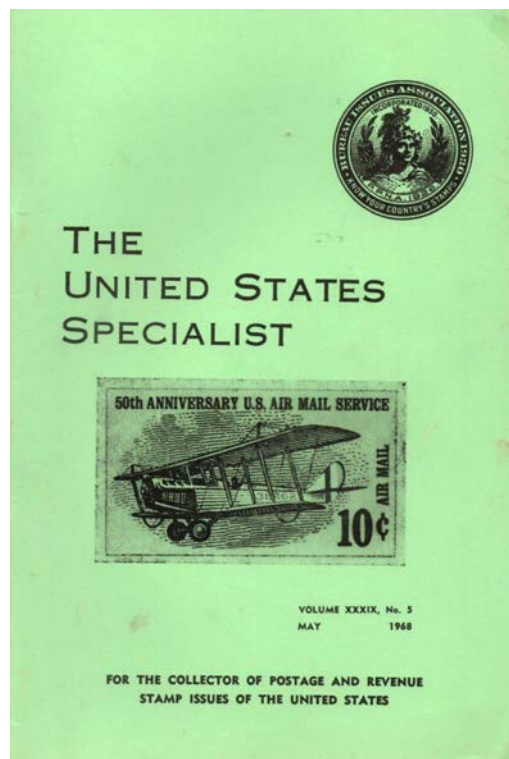
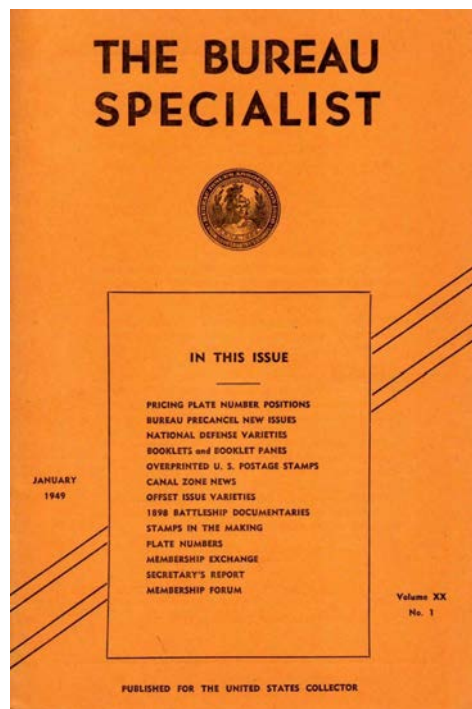
The entire run of this journal is on our shelves and available to anyone who visits NWPL. While copies may not be checked out like most of our books, interested persons are encouraged to use the index volumes to find articles of interest. Most of the issues are in bound volumes that we received as a donation.

*The United States Specialist* started out as a typewritten (!) newsletter and Bulletin #1 is dated February 19, 1930. It is headed "Philatelic Plate Number Association," Bureau of Publicity. This journal began during a time when some collectors were primarily

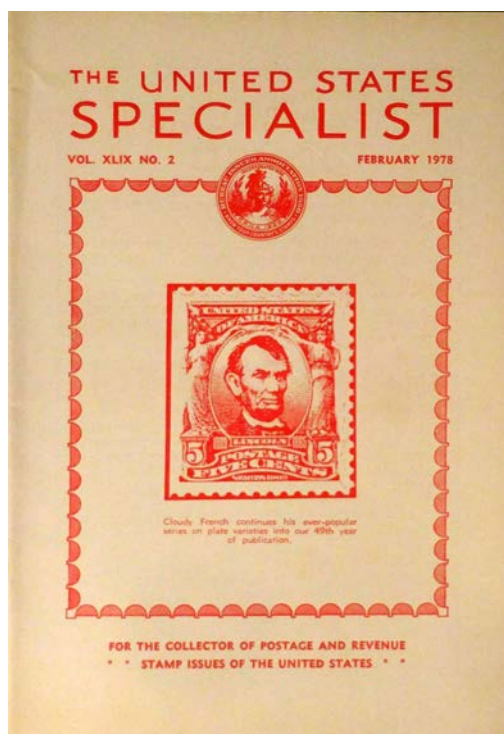
involved with obtaining plate number blocks from all of the positions on a pane of stamps where the plate number appeared. The production of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing was the basis for all of the material covered by the journal, whether these were regular postage issues, revenue stamps, or Bureau precancels, etc. That first issue solicited responses from the membership for a new name for the group, and The Bureau Issues Association was founded.

Since that first newsletter, there have been more than 1,000 issues! The title of the journal was *The Bureau Specialist* until December of 1965, when journal changed to its current title. The name of the group is now The United States Stamp Society and it is the American Philatelic Society's Affiliate #150.

Even a brief tour through these issues reveals a tremendous range of material on stamp design, rate information, production statistics, issue dates,







errors, etc. The third issue of April 23, 1930, gives details about the new Graf Zeppelin stamps and is emphatic about the fact that they are **not** airmail stamps! Throughout these early issues the tone of the writing is informative, extensively detailed and quite chatty. It's not often that a writer will include a comment like "And now let me eat humble pie." This as an admission that he had published inaccurate information, and that "Explanations would fill a page." The detail in these articles is just amazing.

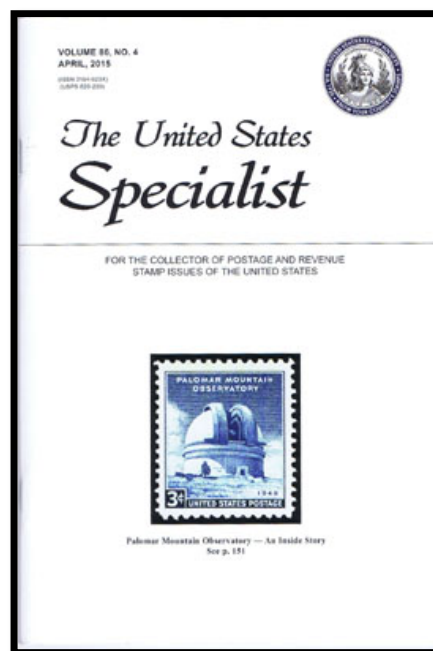
No aspect of the collection of U.S. stamps is passed by. Moving into a later stage of the journal in 1987, the lead article has to do with "Early Plate Destruction Reports." A photograph on the cover shows a horse-drawn wagon with what appears to be a military escort, somewhere in the Washington, D.C. area, in 1890. This Bureau wagon was used to haul stamp production plates "...to furnaces at the Washington Navy Yard."

This article is only Part II! A recent issue from August 2016 has a lead article titled "X-Ray Diffraction Study of the Paper Used by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to Produce 1c and 2c Stamps Between 1894 and 1913." This is no short piece, either. Anyone looking for detail need go no further than this kind of research.

*The United States Specialist*, by itself, could be considered a must-read for anyone committed to the study of U.S. stamp collecting. While other magazines and journals have excellent writing over some of the same areas, there is really nothing to compare with the depth and dedication of the writers who go to great lengths to produce articles for this prestigious publication. Regular contributors in particular must be applauded for their continuing efforts.

When you are in the clubhouse of the Oregon Stamp Society on your next visit, take some time to wander down to the basement where your library resides. Ask one of the friendly and knowledgeable librarians to show you the shelf where you can find *The United States Specialist*. Take any issue or look up a particular subject in one of the index volumes, find a chair, and prepare to get to know a bit more about United States stamps.

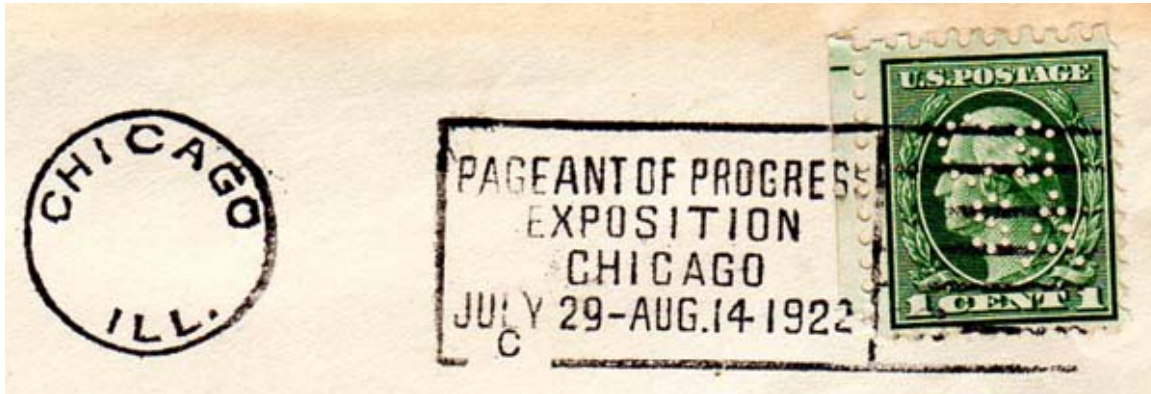
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## Stumper Answer

Last issue's stumper featured a cover with something for everyone. It had a 1922 slogan cancellation from Chicago's Pageant of Progress Exposition, as well as a "CSSA" perfin. The cancellation dial was missing a date and time inside the cancellation ring. Our questions were:

- 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?



Richard L. Reese supplied part of the answer: the letter was mailed at the third class rate. Because there was no rush in moving third class mail (typically advertising), the time and date were left off the postmark. Third class letters also had to remain unsealed, which this cover is.

Charles Neyhart guessed at the perfin mystery. CSS certainly stands for "Cunard Steam Ship" Co., as the return address indicates. But Cunard was headquartered in New York; the "A" probably indicates that these stamps were used by the primary branch office in Chicago.

And what was the exposition all about? Chicago's Pageant of Progress was held in both 1921 and 1922 on the city's vast Municipal Pier (now Navy Pier). It was intended to rival World's Fair expositions, but was really more of a regional trade fair. Spanning three weekends, the pageant played host to seaplane and speedboat championships, conferences of the International Radio Congress, National Congress of Motion Picture Producers, Distributors and Exhibitors, and a Woman's Congress. Boasting "33 miles of exhibits," the expo's major exhibitors included the Ford Motor Company, the USDA, and numerous public health exhibits. Officials estimated that more than 150,000 visitors attended. Though the event didn't become an annual fair, it did serve as something of a model for the Century of Progress Exposition about a decade later.



## Winter Stumper

Some years back this cover was fished out of a 25¢ box at a Rose City Stamp Show. At first glance it appears to be a FDC of Scott #947, but a closer look reveals it was cancelled several days later in New York's Grand Central Station. Of interest is the autograph to the left of the stamp.



The stumper this month: Who was “ER Grove” and what was this person’s significance to both the philatelic and numismatic hobbies?

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 answer in our next issue.

### Northwest Philatelic Library accepts tax-deductible donations!

The NPL is a 501c(3) not-for-profit entity and we welcome donations of literature, stamps and supplies. All proceeds support the purchase and upkeep of the library collection for the use of members and the public. Stamps and supplies that we are unable to sell are donated to our children’s program. Nothing is wasted. Thanks for thinking of us.

## Surplus Books for sale

Among the literature contributions the library receives are often books we already have in our collection. These books and catalogs are offered for sale at very reasonable prices and we often negotiate on price. Proceeds go to our new acquisitions. We regularly have new additions to our surplus shelves behind the main library desk, so head down to the OSS basement and see what new material is available. The full list of duplicate books is posted on our website – check the “Books for Sale” link on our home page: [NWPL.org](http://NWPL.org).

###



## New on our Shelves

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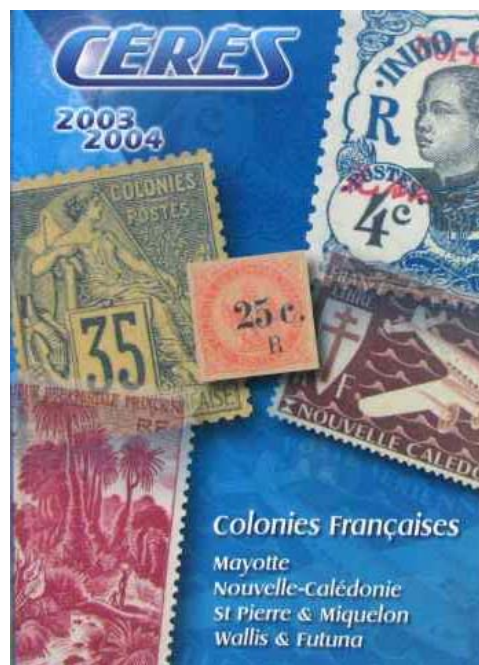
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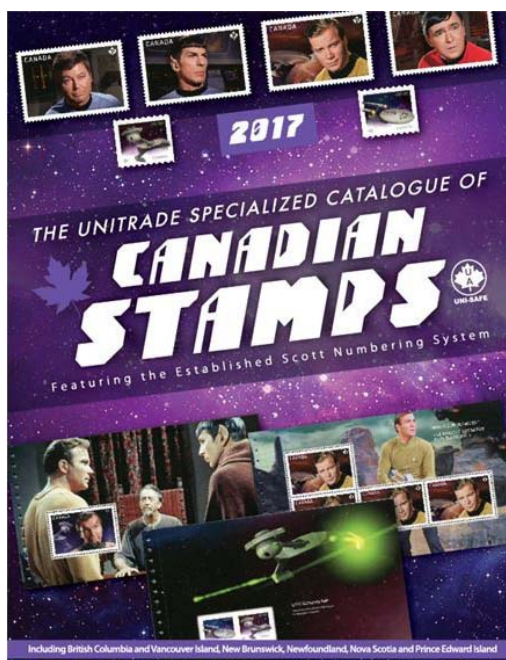
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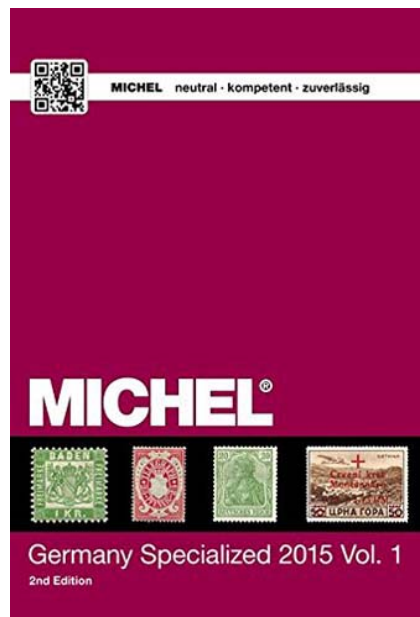
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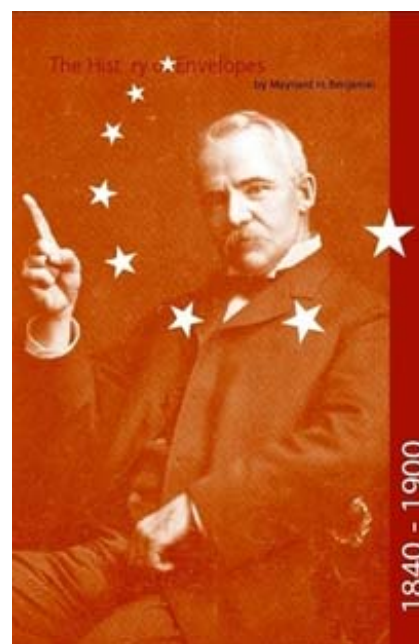
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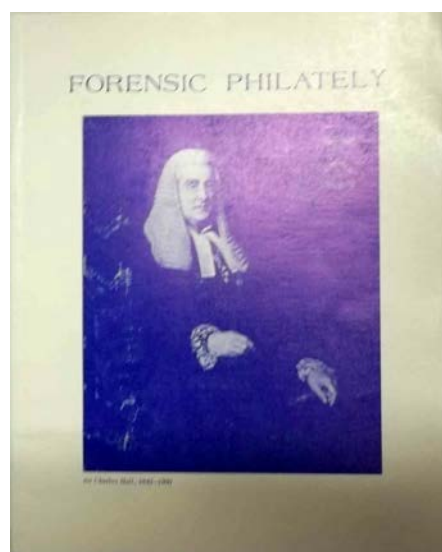
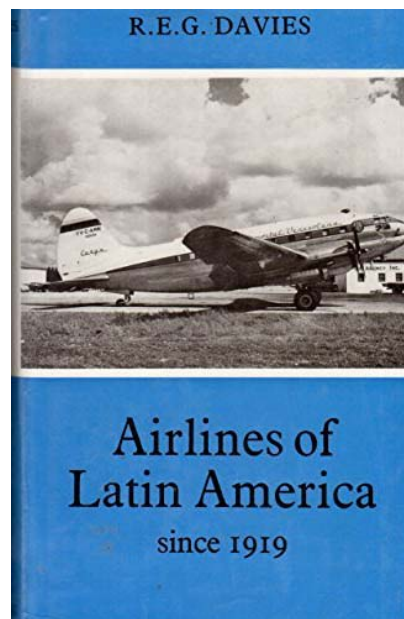
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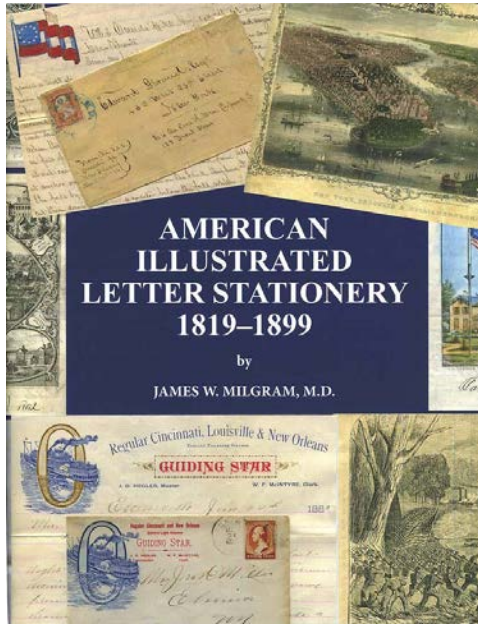
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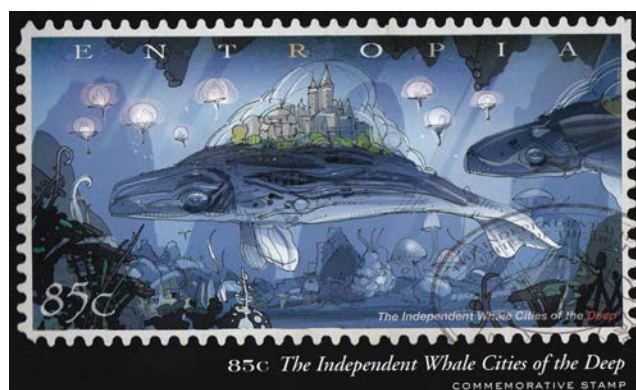
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## AUCTION CATALOGS



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## Library Notes

Orlie Trier, NPL President

### Still looking for an editor – and writers

Readers may have noticed that delivery of this issue of Book Reports wasn't very timely. Our interim editor is very apologetic, but he reports that family emergencies since last summer have made it difficult to find the time to put together the newsletter. He also now lives in Pendleton, so keeping up on events in Portland is a challenge. We are still on the lookout for a new editor – as well as contributors willing to write short articles or features. Please contact me at [nwpl@qwestoffice.net](mailto:nwpl@qwestoffice.net) if you are able to assist with this work.

### Thanks Isaac

It's long overdue, but we'd like to thank board member Isaac Oelgart for his time at the library during the last year's APS show, helping out with the Boy Scout merit badge effort. We need to continue to engage young stamp collectors to build interest in the hobby and we appreciate Ike's contribution.



## 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.

Greg Alexander  
Michael Dixon

Charles Neyhart  
Sheryl Ruecker

*THANK YOU all for your support!*

### Northwest Philatelic Library, Inc.

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Contact: P.O. Box 6375, Portland, OR 97228-6375  
(503) 867-4764 [nwpl@qwestoffice.net](mailto:nwpl@qwestoffice.net)

On the web at:  
[www.nwpl.org](http://www.nwpl.org)

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