



The First Christmas Stamp
RPA: Who are We • RPA Upcoming Meetings
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Dave Roehrig • Ray Stone

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The First Christmas Stamp? by Robert Lighthouse

The famous 19th century Canadian Map Stamp (or Christmas Stamp if you prefer) depicting the British possessions in red was issued on December 7th, 1898 (Scott #85). The design was contrived by Postmaster Sire William Mulock and approved by the Universal Postal Union. The stamps lowered the rate from 3¢ to 2¢ an ounce to encourage the volume of mail throughout most locations in the British Empire. By and large, the venture was successful. The stamp was actually delivered to the larger Canadian post offices on December 2, 1898, long before Christmas Day.

This article discusses some of the earliest known dated covers with the stamp. The Holy Grail would be a cover dated before December 7th, 1898, after the stamp was delivered, but before the official release date. Fred Fawn, famous Canadian exhibitor who exhibited at ROPEX in 2006, acquired a cover apparently dated December 2nd from Maresh Auctions in October of 1898 (shown below). He surmised it was genuine and submitted the cover to the Greene Foundation and the BPA.



from Feisen, 2022 in Xmas 1898 Map Stamp Report

Both organizations initially refused to render a certificate of opinion. Experts determined that the “2” in the date stamp is too far to the right of December and it’s more likely that a “1” had been ghosted and the date is more likely December 12th. No one knows the whereabouts of the cover today. Current technology should permit a definitive decision. Therefore, the 7th remains the earliest date until proven otherwise. My suspicion is their delivery from Ottawa to Toronto or Montreal on or about the 2nd would be too late to produce a cover with a December 2nd cancellation.

At this point there are eight known December 7th dated covers. Here are a few of my favorites.



A previously unreported patriotic cover with a U.S. and British flag and QV half cent numeral stamps



Two cent green postal entire plus QV one cent numeral and lavender map stamp paying the UPU 5¢ foreign rate from Ottawa to Liverpool, England
Spink Shreves Gallery, November 2007

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RPA: Who are We?

As of the beginning of February (after 2025 renewals ended) we have 61 members, 52 of whom live in greater Monroe County. The oldest is Roger Zaenglein (#2020-03) who is 98 and regularly joins us via Zoom. The youngest is Phil Savka (20), followed by Gabe Foltz (24). Our average membership age is 75.6 years old. While no one is getting younger, we're all aging at the same rate! With Ray Stone's unfortunate passing, our longest-time member is 92 year-young, life member Bruno Antonini (#1972-20). That's 53 years! Residing farthest afield in Austin, Texas is another life member, Marvin Raphael (#1976-17). The newest RPA member is Paul Wagner (#2025-02) of Boalsburg, PA. Congrats one and all!

We meet at the Unity Village Community Center, 1477 Long Pond Road in Greece. Buy/sell/trade runs from 7:00-7:30 PM, followed by the formal meeting at 7:30 PM. A silent auction concludes most evening's program.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Thursday February 27: Geomorphology on Postage Stamps *by Fred Haynes*
(see story on page 5)

Thursday, Mar 13..... Railroad Destination Cancellations (Part 2) exhibit *by Robert Lighthouse*

Thursday, Mar 27..... LASO Show and Tell
(see article on page 3)

Thursday, Apr 10..... 日本郵便のキャンセル
by Rich Spinelli

Thursday, Apr 24..... North American Earthquakes on Stamps, Postcards, and Letters *by Rob Sternberg*

Thursday, May 8..... My Space Philatelic Collection *by Barry Zack*

Thursday, May 22.... Boston 2026 Update

Thursday, Jun 12..... India Philately Part 1
by K.K. Rajamani

Thursday, Jun 26..... India Philately Part 2
by K.K. Rajamani

If you can't attend a meeting in person, join us via a Zoom connection using the following link and login details at 7:30 PM each meeting night.

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/7117955142?pwd=amR3Z1Z3L0d4bkJaNHdJUjBmbjFaQT09>

RPA - Newest Life Member

RPA members receive a life membership on reaching 25 continuous years of paid dues. Latest to reach that milestone is **Rich Spinelli** (#2000-07). As his number implies, he was the seventh member to join us in 2000. Rich has been active in club activities since joining, including being a ROPEX Committee member for many years. He was elected Treasurer 2003-2008, and President 2013-2017 along with assuming the Recording Secretary role. Rich's philatelic interests include US stamps and especially postal history, often researching the correspondents and contents.



Besides philately Rich collects and researches old engravings and prints, especially concentrating on those from Japan. You may recognize the photo above that came from a 2013 Democrat & Chronicle newspaper article from December 2, 2013 titled, "A philatelic fascination revived for Greece man." It's still available online at:

<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/lifestyle/people/2013/12/02/a-philatelic-fascination-revived-for-greece-man/3789737/>.

Congratulations, Rich!



On February 28th the US will issue a 15-stamp set featuring scenes from all 14 states that the Appalachian Trail crosses. The New York stamp features Fitzgerald Falls in Monroe, Orange County.

Learning About Stamps Online

Consider Joining LASO

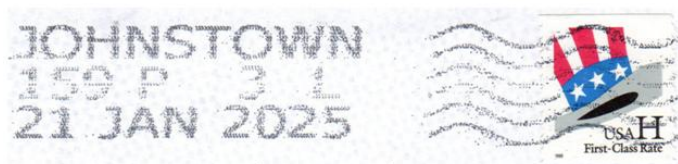
A new free internet-based stamp group has formed called **Learning About Stamps Online**, or LASO for short. So far there are 241 members from the US, Canada and 11 other countries. They meet monthly on the third Tuesday of every month at 8 PM Eastern via Zoom with presentations on a variety of philatelic subjects for beginners through advanced collectors. Upcoming April through July are talks on Collecting the World from the Beginning, A Brief Overview of the British Machin Definitives, Dead Countries: Time and Place, and Disputed Territories on Map Stamps. Our RPA meeting on March 27 will feature a recording of their February "Show and Tell" discussion featuring 9 different stamp and postal history items.

You're invited to join as well! Take a look at their web site <https://learningaboutstamps.org/join/> and consider signing up. The web site includes some helpful references, including an extensive Resource links page and listing of knowledgeable Philatelic Guides with their specialties listed.



What's on That Letter?

Here are two examples of envelopes received with RPA dues in them. Can you spot what's wrong with each? The first includes an invalid stamp. Special delivery stamps are among a small group of U.S. service stamps that are only meant to pay for a particular service, including certified, parcel post and special handling. At one time airmail stamps were only allowed on airmail letters! Maybe you spotted the "H" hat stamp found in the other photo. Kudos to you if you remembered H represents 33 cents in postage, not the current 73 cent letter rate. Now only if that hat stamp was the rare yellow version--used it would be worth at least \$1,250 and probably more being on a cover.



A Strangely Dated First Day Cover

By Kelly Armstrong

I was sorting a box of FDC's without cachets. I planned to research the topics and then make appropriate cachets. However, I came across one that had me stumped. Scott #788 was issued on 3/27/37. An example of that cover is pictured to the right without the usual "First Day of Issue" cancel. Pictured below is the same stamp with a "First Day" cancel, but dated 4/15/42. In the past the USPS has occasionally reissued a stamp with a different first day date, but neither Scott's catalog nor HipStamp show any second date for this issue. I knew there was something more to this so I contacted Tom Fortunato.

The 1942 cover is postmarked MacArthur, WV and "First Day Cover." It turns out that the MacArthur post office opened on that date, so this cover notes the "first day" of the PO going into service, not the release of the stamp. Thanks to Tom for his philatelic sleuthing.



The First Christmas Stamp (continued from page 1)

Two more December 7th First Day cancellations featuring the Canada Map stamp:



A Canada postcard sent to Liverpool, England from Ottawa, paying the 2¢ UPU postcard rate with a map stamp,

offered by Maresh & Son, October, 1998 auction



Ten cent special delivery plus a 2¢ map stamp with a Toronto flag D cancel, from John Taylor & Co. special delivery drop letter to B. Mcedcum.

offered by R. Maresh & Son, February 1984

The Best and Worst of 2024

At our first February meeting, around 20 members of RPA met with the monumental task of selecting the best and worst US stamps of 2024. A bit of debate, a bit of fun and then all present voted. The decisions were finalized and sent to Linn's.

Here are the selections:

Commemoratives

Best Design.....Horses (set of 5)

Worst Design.....Alex Trebek

Most Important..... Underground Railroad (set of 10)

Least Necessary...Pinback Buttons (set of 10)

Definitive and Special Stamps

Best Design.....Celebration Blooms

Worst Design..... Love

Most Important..... Flags (set of 4)

Least Necessary...Radiant Star

Overall Favorite Stamp

Horses

Some of the winning (and losing) stamps are depicted below.



The Winners from 2024



The Losers from 2024

On to 2025 and a new set of "winners"!

Dave Roehrig

November 5, 1948

- February 17, 2025



Dave Roehrig passed away on February 17, 2025 at the age of 76. Dave was a Lifetime member of RPA and a regular at all our meetings and events until illness prevented his attending meetings a couple of years ago.

Dave joined RPA in 1995 and became a Lifetime Member 25 years later in 2020. In addition to a broad interest across philately, Dave also collected coins. After retiring from being a tool and die maker and president of IUE-CWA Local 509, Dave became a golf enthusiast. His home course was the Mendon Country Club and its Senior League.

RPA members who remember the old heavy wooden exhibit frames can fondly recall Dave's enthusiasm during set-up and take down at ROPEX. He handled them carefully, one after another, with a smile, a combination that was not always easy, but with his leadership became contagious.

The 2018 ROPEX in Canandaigua may have been his favorite. The theme featured the 100th anniversary of U.S. Air Mail Service combined with the 60th anniversary of Canandaigua to Rochester Air Mail Service. One of Dave's stamp collecting specialties was US airmails and airmail postal history. As a native Rochesterian, he truly appreciated both the philatelic nature of the celebration and its local importance.

Dave was always there with a helping hand and a smile at meetings also. Whether it was moving tables to accommodate a special program, figuring out how to best run electrical cords at ROPEX, or doling out strawberry sundaes at our annual "Strawberry Fest" meeting in June, one could always count on Dave as a valuable team member

Dave is survived by his loving wife of 43 years, his children Jessica and David, and by his sister Lucy.

by Fred Haynes



At work at ROPEX, this time with newer lighter frames



Every strawberry sundae needs a bit of whipped cream.

Ray Stone

April 21, 1938
- February 18, 2025



The Rochester Philatelic Association marks 112 years of service to stamp collectors this year. Ray Stone, who passed away February 18th at the age of 86, was an active member for more than half of those years.

Ray joined RPA in 1966, and two years later he worked with Gordon Morison to put on the very first Champion of Champions stamp show in Rochester. He was a member of every show committee from then until the final ROPEX in 2019. He chaired the show committee six times between 1979 and 2010. Ray served as RPA president In 1979-80, 1995-96, and 2007-2009. He was also vice president 2011-13 and 2015-17 and was a Board member 1998-2001 and 2005-07.

Ray exhibited frequently in Rochester, Buffalo, and Elmira. His major collecting interests were first day covers of U.S. transportation coil stamps (especially the 3¢ hand car, issued at ROPEX in 1983), the World War II Woldenberg concentration camp stamps (produced by the inmates), and Norfolk Islands. But his knowledge of stamps and postal history was encyclopedic. Every time RPA had a quiz night, Ray would have a perfect or near-perfect score, even when the questions were esoteric or tricky. He very rarely missed a meeting until his health declined.

He joined the American Philatelic Society in 1968 and was RPA liaison with APS, including handling circuit books at meetings, for many years. He was a member of many other philatelic organizations as well.

Ray was kind. When a fellow club member lost his home because of medical expenses, Ray let him stay at his home for an extended period.

Ray is survived by two siblings, Ruth and Roger; his children Joseph, Christine, and Sharon; six grandchildren and two great grandchildren, as well as other relatives and his enormous philatelic family.

by Ada Prill



Ray's involvement with ROPEX started early. In this photo Ray (in the white shirt) helps youngsters get their start in stamp collecting.



For many years Ray worked at the Post Office. Is it any surprise that he collected postal vehicles? He brought several to a club meeting in September, 2019.



In 2018, Ray received a medallion from the American Philatelic Society honoring his half century of APS membership and his long-term support for the national organization. He wore his new badge with pride at our October meeting that year.