



Bulletin

The Newsletter of the West Toronto Stamp Club
www.westtorontostampclub.org

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Fairfield Seniors' Centre
80 Lothian Ave., Etobicoke, ON
416-394-8687

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B. Timberg, Editor

President Sid's Message

At the recent GTAPA Annual General Meeting, I was pleased to receive the GTAPA Challenge Award Trophy together with Frank Alusio and Garfield Portch, two members of the team who won the award for our club. Our third team member, Denzil Fernandes, was unable to be present.

This trophy has been awarded annually since 2003 to the winner of the single frame contest between GTAPA clubs. This is the first time our team has won the award. Frank's exhibit "The Unification of Italy", Denzil's "Overseas Mail via Bombay, 1869-1898" and Garfield's "The Expansion of the Post Office in Toronto, 1880-1899" easily won this year's award. At our June 13 meeting I will be proud to present the GTAPA Challenge Award Trophy to our team winners.

I am also pleased to report that our WTSC Annual Exhibition was again a fine success. Thank you to all who exercised their creativity by exhibiting and to the attendees who showed their appreciation and interest in the exhibits displayed. The Alusio Trophy (single page) was won by Denzil whose sesquicentennial motivation was the joy and value of Canadian citizenship. The Ted Allan Cup (multi page) was won by Dan Buss who shared a phenomenal unique signed polar expeditionary cover. The Drake Trophy (single frame) was won by Garfield who shared his three-cent small queen classification by perforation exhibit, a most useful tool for small queen collectors. Congratulations to the winners who will be recognized and awarded their trophies at our June 13 meeting.

As well it should be noted that Sam Chiu, this year's judge, provided an invaluable lesson to all attendees and useful feedback and encouragement to this year's single frame participants. Sam's expertise is valued and his participation and time given generously were most appreciated. A special thank you also to Garfield for his leadership which ensured the success of this year's exhibition.

There is much to look forward to as we move into a hopefully sunny June. During this last month of the WTSC philatelic year, be sure to:

~ attend the Members Buy and Sell evening on the first Tuesday, June 6. Who knows what treasures you might uncover or what surplus items you may be able to sell;

~ peruse and purchase items during our first Circuit Book session to be held June 13 from 6:30 to 7:30, to be followed by our regular meeting and auction;

~ attend our final Discussion Group evening on June 20, a night of growing your philatelic knowledge and appreciation; and

~ celebrate by participating in this year's Pot Luck to be held during the first part of our final meeting on June 27.

I look forward to your participation as we share an exciting final month of the 2016/2017 WTSC philatelic year.

Sid



From left to right at the GTAPA AGM, held at the Greene Foundation, Frank Alusio, Garfield Portch, Sid Mensinga.

Membership

We are very pleased to welcome three new members to the club, bringing our paid-up membership to 86. Our new members are Belkis Herrera (# 1088), Paul Oda (# 1089) and Rob Laker (# 1090).

June Activities

Meetings are held on Tuesday evening unless otherwise specified. Doors open at 6:30, meetings start at 7.

June 6 ~ Members Buy & Sell

June 13 ~ Circuit Books & Regular Meeting

Circuit book session, Exchange of information, Show & Tell and Auction

June 20 ~ Discussion Group

The meeting has two parts. In part 1, club member Lawrence Pinkney will use a PowerPoint presentation to discuss researching a Steele Briggs cover on Manitoulin Island. Garfield will then wrap up the meeting with a PowerPoint show "Pardon me, your slip is showing", a humorous look at design errors in world-wide stamps.

June 27 ~ Pot Luck & Regular Meeting

Pot luck, Exchange of information, Show & Tell and Auction

Auction of the Inverted Jenny

On May 11, 2017, the McCoy inverted jenny stamp (position 76) sold at auction for nearly US\$300K. For the story, see:

<http://canadianstampnews.com/auction-review-april-jenny-invert-brings-nearly-300k/>

PHSC Symposium 2017

Reminder - July 20-23 is the date of the PHSC's Symposium 2017 in Hamilton. For details see:

<http://www.postalhistorycanada.net/php/Symposium/>

Volunteers Needed - The RPSC will have a table at the Symposium and is seeking volunteers to man the table for 2 hours on either July 22 or 23. If you can assist, please e-mail the editor at timberg@bell.net and I will pass on your contact details to the Royal.

Royal2017Royale

Congratulations are due club member Don Hedger who entered two exhibits in the single frame category at last month's RPSC convention in Boucherville, "A Soldier's Postcards - Mailed from the Somme and Flanders WW1 - May 1915 - March 1916" and "Epic of Vimy - A Canadian Pilgrimage". The latter received a

Large Vermeil, and an award from the AAPE for creativity and also one from the ATA.

Learning Workshops

Learning and sharing ideas at a special get-together turned out to be a great success since the club began a series of monthly "Learning Workshop" evenings last fall.

From October 4, with members bringing examples for the inaugural session that featured "My Favourite Stamp," to "Slogans" on May 2, examples, backgrounding, discussions and questions from participants were most encouraging.

We even had an "A" evening - talk about stamps and postal history that began with that letter. Hint: "B" prepared for a similar subject in the coming year.

And who can forget "Tools," when tongs, ultra-violet lights, stockbooks, catalogues, magnifying glasses and stamp-soaking trays came out of the closet. And who can ever forget Simon Claughton's photo print dryer ... with dried stamps safe to handle within mere seconds, safe and sound!

This is being written before our wrap-up evening on June 6, which was scheduled as another "let's see how this goes" event, with members invited to bring their spare stamps, postal history, supplies, tools and books to sell. If successful, there's a good chance of a follow-up.

With all that in mind, it is a real pleasure to announce that more "Learning Workshop" evenings will be offered during the 2017-18 season, starting October 3, again in the library at the Fairfield Seniors' Centre.

As before, suggestions are most welcome.

Preferred method of giving them to me: green slips of paper on which members can jot ideas will again be provided at the front table on regular meeting nights. (That way, I can slip notes into my binder and refer to them later).

Whispers: See above, though discussions are always good too.

On a final note, seating is a bit limited, but with attendance ranging from 12 to 20 including some new members, we always managed to find enough chairs - and elbow room. In fact, the more, the merrier!

Ian

The One-cent Magenta

"*The One-cent Magenta: Inside the Quest to Own the Most Valuable Stamp in the World*", Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2017, James Barron (\$29.80 on-line at Indigo; available also through Toronto Public Library).

My first stamp album back in the 1950's had a spot for the 1856 British Guiana one-cent magenta. Like many thousands of other young collectors, the empty spot demanded to be filled. I was convinced there were one-cent magentas to be found, in long forgotten family correspondence or buried in packages of stamps still on paper supposedly from foreign missionaries looking to raise a few dollars. Why else would there be a spot for it in an album?

It was only much later that I learned the one-cent magenta was intended for use on periodicals, typically newspapers, for a very limited period of time, and the likelihood of finding one long forgotten in a trunk or dresser in Canada or in missionary bulk stamp packages was for all intents and purposes nil.

The stamp isn't pretty. In the words of the Smithsonian, it "is a bit like looking at a red-wine stain or a receipt that's been through the wash a few times." However, since it is regarded as the rarest stamp in the world, 'prettiness' isn't much of a concern.

James Barron's book runs 276 5"x7" pages (241 if you exclude the acknowledgements and notes).

While it may be 'little' in size, the book does not by any stretch have little content. It is chockablock full of information, some of which I had never heard of before, all rolled out in the form of a narrative.

Interspersed throughout the story are the author's observations, I suspect sometimes made tongue-in-cheek, on the hobby and on those who pursue rarities such as the one-cent magenta, which he collectively calls 'Stamp World'. Sadly, those who collect the rarest of stamps today do so for the most part not because they are serious collectors if they are collectors at all, but because the stamps are rare.

The story of the one-cent magenta begins in 1855-6 when the colony found itself short on stamps because an expected shipment from England had arrived only in part. The local postmaster, Edward Thomas Evans Dalton, was forced to have the local newspaper, The Royal Gazette, print two provisionals, a 1 one-cent for periodicals (i.e., newspapers mainly) and a four-cent for letters. The provisionals were initialed by post office workers to guard against counterfeiting. In the case of the one-cent magenta that exists today, it was signed by post office worker E.D. Wight.

The provisionals were used probably for a few months only, and likely no more than a few thousand were printed. Experts put the upper number at no more than 10,000.

Flash forward 17 years to 1873. Louis Vernon Vaughan's uncle had moved to Barbados, and twelve-year old Louis was looking through his house for stamps for his collection. He found the one-cent magenta but didn't understand its significance. Louis may even have been the one who clipped the corners of the stamp when cutting it off the newspaper, but no one knows for sure. In what others have called the worst stamp swap in history, he sold it for six shillings (less than USD17 today).

Vaughan worked as a tax collector his entire life and always declined to talk about the one that got away. He lived to nearly 90 and remained a collector throughout, rising to the top of the British Guiana Philatelic Society.

The purchaser of the stamp was Neil Ross McKinnon. Several years later, in 1878, he made a decent profit by selling it to Thomas Ridpath of Liverpool for 120 pounds (about 28,000 in today's US dollars).

Almost immediately Ridpath also turned a profit by selling it for 150 pounds to the enormously wealthy, eccentric Count Philippe Arnold de la Renotière von Ferrary. Ferrary is widely regarded as having the greatest collection of worldwide stamps ever assembled, including seven of the famous Post Office Mauritius stamps.

Ferrary lived in the Hôtel Matignon on the Rue de Verenne in Paris. He disliked the French however, his heart was with his 'beloved Austria' and 'dear Germany'.

Ferrary added to the mystery of the one-cent magenta by refusing to let the stamp be seen in public. He even declined an invitation from King George V to bring the stamp to England for the King to see. It would be 1922 before the stamp was again seen in public.

WW1 complicated Ferrary's life and he fled to Switzerland where he died in 1917 in the back seat of a taxi after making a stamp purchase. The bulk of his collection was back in the Hôtel Matignon, including the one-cent magenta.

Ferrary's will specified that his collection go to the Reichspost Museum in Berlin. France naturally had other plans and seized it from the Matignon. Between 1921 and 1925 the collection was auctioned off in 14 separate sales (the collection was so vast). The one-cent magenta went for USD32,500 in 1922 (about USD459,000 today).

The purchaser, Arthur Hind, was a textile industrialist. He collected stamps by the thousands. If one was rare, he had to have it. The one-cent magenta gave him what he most craved – fame. His card, bearing his signature, carried a reproduction of the stamp with the words “The most valuable postage stamp in the world. The only known copy of the British Guiana one cent.”

Hind is rumoured to have purchased a second one-cent magenta which he paid for with cash not by cheque. Upon completing the purchase, so the story goes, he offered a cigar to the seller, lit one for himself, then proceeded to incinerate the second stamp as the horrified seller looked on. Is the story true? No one knows.

Hind married late and his marriage was not a happy one. When he died in 1933 his will excluded his wife from his stamp collection. She didn't want his Post Office Mauritius stamps or his Inverted Jennies or his collection of Confederate stamps. She wanted the one-cent magenta and in the end, she got it.

Mrs. Hind sold the stamp in 1940 to an unidentified buyer for USD40,000. Later (after he sold the stamp) the purchaser was identified publicly as Frederick Trouton Small, a plant manager and later a vice-president of the textile company Celanese Corporation. He had acquired it as an investment.

Collector and dealer Irwin Weinberg bought the stamp in 1970, almost as an afterthought. In the late 1960s Weinberg had started buying rare stamps as a hedge against inflation. When the one-cent magenta was put to auction, he set up a limited partnership to bid on the stamp. The investors were prepared to go as high as USD500,000. They paid USD286,000.

Weinberg was a master at using publicity to increase the value of the stamp. He used armoured cars to transport it (after of course first alerting the press). He handcuffed a briefcase containing the stamp to his wrist and took it to stamp shows including CAPEX in Toronto in 1978.

By 1980 the investors wanted to cash out. Weinberg had to sell. The purchaser at auction was John E. du Pont, a passionate and fabulously wealthy collector. He paid USD935,000.

Du Pont was always eccentric. His descent into mental illness began in the 1990s. He became a Howard Hughes character, one minute seemingly normal, and a short time later not.

On January 26, 1996 du Pont visited a stamp store. He couldn't have been more normal. Two hours later, the delusional du Pont shot and killed Dave Schultz, a

wrestler training at an athletic training centre on the du Pont estate. John du Pont never saw the one-cent magenta again.

While in prison, du Pont is said to have offered the stamp to the National Postal Museum at the Smithsonian in exchange for a pardon. The offer went nowhere. Du Pont died in 2010 in the middle of a 30-year sentence.

In 2014 du Pont's one-cent magenta went to auction. Some speculated it might go as high as USD15 million. Stuart Weitzman (of Stuart Weitzman Shoes) acquired it for 'only' USD9.48 million.

Weitzman, the stamp's current owner, collects all sorts of one-of-a-kind rarities. In stamps, nothing better fits the bill than the one-cent magenta. As a boy his album had a spot for the stamp. He was able to 'fill' the spot.

The One-cent Magenta is not solely about its owners, as entertaining as their stories are. Sprinkled throughout the book are too many other details to mention in this brief review, including times the one-cent magenta has been mentioned in novels or comic books, on TV, and in movies. I will leave it you to read the book to learn those details.

There is however a sub-plot within the narrative worth mentioning, the authenticity of the stamp. There have been suggestions from time-to-time that the one-cent magenta is nothing more than a four-cent provisional that was altered, by rubbing out the F in FOUR and the S in CENTS and altering OUR to ONE.

The RPSL long ago declared the stamp authentic. The Smithsonian put the question to bed once and for all prior to Weitzman's purchase. The stamp is authentic.

Yours in philately.

Ed.

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