

Newcomers' Page

Speaking Philately, Washington's Swell

By DIXON DONNELLY

Stranger, if you tucked a stamp album next to the cookies in your carpetbag when you left Painted Post or Podunk for Washington, you were headed for your own peculiar brand of heaven. This whistle-stop nourishes almost as many stamp collectors as grayed ex-congressmen.

That section of the populace which satisfies its acquisitive urge and finds relaxation—even thrills—in the gentle practice of pasting serrated bits of gummed paper into a scrapbook, comprises a surprisingly large percentage of the District census total.

PRESIDENT A LEADING COLLECTOR

Washington's first citizen is likewise one of her leading stamp collectors and, altho the threat of war has prevented President Roosevelt from putting in much time with his mucilage and album, his fellow hobbyists paste and clip and attend collectors' meetings with as much fervor as if a former Austrian housepainter had never hammered his brush into a sword.

Their ranks include high Government executives and charwomen, housewives and dentists, school children and bus drivers, topped with a goodly sprinkling of Army and Navy officers. Government workers, naturally, are in the majority. Apparently, every stamp collector can expect his boy to grow up and become Postmaster General, for a number of ranking officials in the Post Office Department are also fervid philatelists, and frequently speak on stamp lore before local collectors' clubs.

OVER 50 CLUBS HERE

There are well over 50 of these groups here, and they exist almost without rivalry on a happy family basis. Many collectors belong to two or three, as their interests dictate.

If you're a confirmed addict, you see, you don't just "collect stamps." You're interested in air mail covers, and spurn lower denominations, or you hunt the shops for Danish West Indies issues and turn up your nose when a friend speaks of mundane European sets.

There are individual groups catering to each special taste. Circles are devoted exclusively to consideration of postmarks from American battleships, and, recently, from Army camps. To a beginner, the diversification of interest is bewildering—and appallingly specialized.

COLLECTORS CLUB TYPICAL

One of the largest stamp groups is the Collectors Club of Washington, which boasts scores of members and meets every Tuesday evening at 8 in the Thomson School, 12th and L streets nw. This is a "general" group which draws members of all shades of philatelic opinion. Many also belong to such sect as the Washington Airmail Society, the Capitol Pre-Cancellation Society, or to stamp clubs in the Government recreation sections, of which the Agriculture Department's is one of the largest.

Membership in the Collectors Club is open to anyone interested in stamps—altho beginners should be warned that they may not understand the language their first few visits. It holds regular exhibitions and frequently stages gatherings of collectors from the eastern sections of the country, at which stamps are discussed learnedly over the inevitable banquet of chicken a la king.

MEETINGS ARE LIVELY

Its meetings are lively affairs which feature a speaker. (Second Assistant Postmaster General Smith W. Purdum was a recent guest.) Frequently, officers of Latin American embassies and legations are present. On occasion, an expert from the Bureau of Printing and Engraving explains the technical side of issuing stamps, or a researcher from the Library of Congress gives a progress report on his findings.

An important part of every collectors' gathering—whether they number two or 200—is the trading of stamps. The Collectors Club regularly holds auctions at which rare items are let go to the highest bidder.

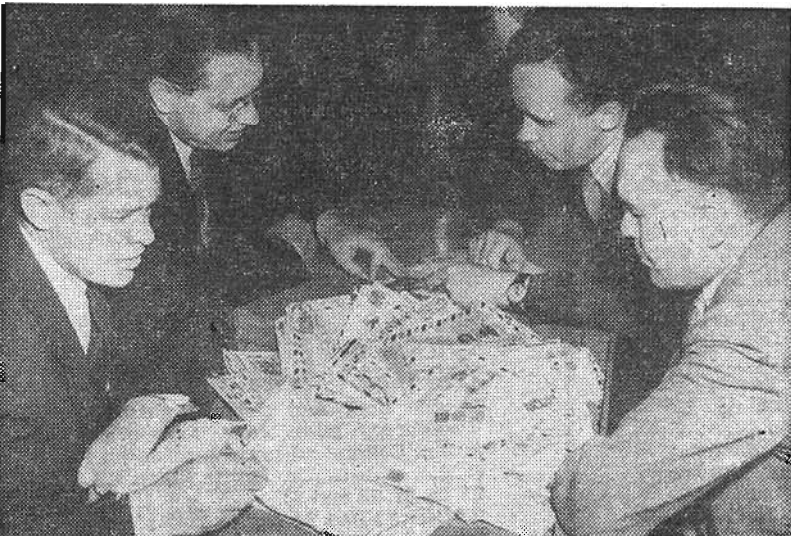
MONTHLY BULLETIN

The club publishes a monthly bulletin—a pithy little folder presenting the latest news in the Washington philatelic world, replete with such homey items as: "Former President Frank A. Bickert . . . is now in Woodlynne, N. J., and is president of the stamp club there and is, as always, carrying on exceedingly well."

Washington collectors are in a peculiarly fortunate position, for the accessibility of the Post Office Department and the Bureau of Printing and Engraving keeps them constantly in touch with philatelic matters, and informed in advance of events calculated to shake the stamp world to its hinges.



The religious interest displayed by District collectors in serrated bits of gummed paper is typified in this photo, which shows Daniel H. Reichgut (seated), president of the Collectors Club, going over the fine points of a rare item for Mrs. Grace MacKnight, vice president, with William M. Stuart, editor of the club bulletin and president of Washington Airmail Society, a rapt on-looker. Collectors make a practice of lending choice stamps back and forth.



To your true collector, an evening spent poring over a tableful of canceled envelopes is the epitome of pleasure. Here (left to right) C. M. Farquhar and Robert A. Truax, trade stamps with Angus Alexander and W. C. Summer.

"I bid . . ." An auction at the Collectors Club (right) is a time of hot and heavy bargaining when choice offerings come up. Surprisingly high prices (to the uninitiated) are sometimes paid for apparently worthless scraps. No World's Fair could possibly elicit as many "oh's" and "ah's" and learned discussions from local album-pasters as their own exhibitions. They display their collections with as much pride as a fan dancer airing her epidermis.

