



The Philatelic Communicator

Journal of the American Philatelic Society Writers Unit #30 • Winter 2023 • N° 219



ELOBEY, ANNOBÓN & CORISCO

A literary-philatelic mystery

Writing about stamps for fun and profit

As Lloyd notes in his President's message (pg. 3), there is a palpable sense today that our hobby is at some kind of inflection point—or at least, its institutions are. Our clubs, societies, publications and shows are changing, and the pace of change seems to be picking up.

To get a sense of what impact this is having on the craft of philatelic writing, **TPC** reached out to some of the most plugged-in

Five editors share their thoughts on the state of philatelic publishing in 2023.

among us: philatelic editors. These are the folks who read broadly and constantly, think critically, network like crazy and try to keep on top of all things philatelic, while still retaining some degree of sanity. What they have to say is thought-provoking and inspiring. On pgs. 4-5, and at wu30.org, you'll find summaries of their comments from recent conversations and email exchanges.

Our hope is to carry on these conversations, particularly when we gather in person this summer at the Great American Stamp Show in Cleveland, Ohio on Aug. 10-13. Until then!

—MH

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William Styron / Erstwhile stamp writer

William Waterway Marks
via Wikimedia Commons

William Styron, the great American novelist who wrote *Lie Down in Darkness*, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, *Sophie's Choice*, *Darkness Visible* and more, also wrote about stamps.

Well—once, anyway. *The Suicide Run*, a posthumous collection of stories either previously unpublished or only appearing in magazines, comprises five brief narratives dealing with Styron's time in the U.S. Marine Corps. The stories were collected in book form a few years after he died in 2006.

As summarized in an editor's afterword, "together they present a complex picture of military life—its hardships, deprivations, and stupidities; its esprit, camaraderie, and seductive allure."

The editor didn't have much to say about the fifth piece in the collection, "Elobey, Annobón, and Corisco" (yes, Styron liked his Oxford commas) other than the fact that after Styron wrote it in

1995, the story languished in typescript form among his papers at Duke University until 2010.

Less than four pages long, the story nonetheless captures the quintessential appeal of stamp collecting. Styron here recalls whiling away his days on the Pacific island of Saipan during World War II, terrified of an upcoming battle as well as the risks of revealing his dread. To soothe himself, he daydreams about his boyhood stamp collection and the peaceful, faraway islands it conjured.

Writing from the vantage point of old age, however, Styron presents the philatelically savvy reader with a puzzle: his memory of his stamps is unreliable. And so we have a bit of a mystery to solve.

The story begins:

"Elobey, Annobón, and Corisco.

These form a group of small islands off the west coast of Africa, in the Gulf of

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The Executive Committee will be reconstituted at the next election. Volunteers are sought for the following positions: Historian, Publicist, Special events, AIJP liaison. Please reach out to the President if interested in helping with these roles.

Evolve or die: institutions must change as philately changes

Too many of our hobby's institutions—societies, shows and publications—suffer from a failure to keep up with the way philately is practiced in the 21st century. We see this for instance in

Matthew Healey the (now dropped) merger proposal between the American Philatelic Society and the American Stamp Dealers Association; in the failure of last year's merger between the American Philatelic Congress and the Postal History Society to turn around the declining fortunes of either organization; and in the recent decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to add philatelic editors to the endangered-species list.

OK, that last one I just made up—though we could definitely use a few more philatelic editors around here.

Charles Epting, of H.R.Harmer Inc., recently asked on Twitter whether philately was dying or being killed. His intent was not to be a doomsayer, but to point out that all too often, the institutions charged with supporting and promoting our hobby seem, perversely, to be actively undermining it.

The perception among casual observers is that our hobby is on the way out. We know, of course, that nothing could be further from the truth. But perceptions have a way of dragging on reality.

I had lunch in December with Josh Buchsbayew of Cherrystone Auctions, who told me that his client base is as steady as ever. It's true that his firm doesn't mail out as many printed auction catalogs as it once did (surely a good thing), but the number of bidders in each sale is constant, and the trend in his dollar volume hasn't wavered.

That's at the higher end of the hobby. At the other end, a Facebook group called Stamp Collecting for Beginners, begun in 2020 by a woman using the nom-de-cyberspace Chrissy Louise, boasts 3,800 members, growing week by week. These are true beginners, not affiliated with any philatelic society or subscribing to any stamp publication, never having attended a show, often asking the most basic questions. They are young and old, male and female, and they hail from all corners of the globe.

Chrissy and her friends do a lot of work daily moderating the group's posts to remove spam and maintain civility, but the upshot is that the global appeal of our hobby is strong. There is a thirst for philately that our existing institutions don't cater to. Evolution must happen.

None of this is new, of course. Her-

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What does it take to be a philatelic editor?

We are in a time of transition, not just in the real world, but in philately. I'll leave the real world issues to other pundits and other media. Let's talk stamp collecting — and specifically philatelic writing.

Lloyd A. de Vries We have already seen many smaller publications go completely digital and I believe we will see more.

Among the problems for printed philatelic publications is that younger people expect and prefer digital media. Some of us old guys, too. I find on the rare occasions where I'm reading a printed book, I keep hitting the right side to advance to the next page and holding my finger on words for which I want a definition. Seriously, though, if we want to attract younger people to stamp collecting, we have to meet them on their ground.

Just as I was writing this, Amos Media announced that it is separating the *Scott Stamp Monthly* magazine from its weekly *Linn's Stamp News* and 28 of the 52 issues of the newspaper will only be available online. In his Feb. 20 editorial, which went online February 4, editor-in-chief Jay Bigalke leads off with "Responding to the shift toward digital news consumption..."

(That's not to say that printed publications are dead. One of the great advantages to a printed book is that it will still "work" 20, 30 or 80 years from now. You can't say that about your VHS videocassettes and 5¼-inch floppy disks.)

Philately Needs You

Enough philosophizing on media. Closer to home, we are seeing a shortage of philatelic editors, particularly those who know the latest publishing software. I know of about half a dozen stamp collector editors who are comfortable with Adobe InDesign, and two of them — Susanna Mills of the American Philatelic Society, and Bigalke — are restricted to the publications of their



employers. Thus, we see a concentration of "glossy" publications in the hands of just a few editors who can freelance. My observation is that they are at their limits and can't take on much more work.

However, most stamp society publications don't need InDesign and their editors don't need any specific training. Most are adequately served with newsletters than can be produced using word processing software you already own.

Two-and-a-half years ago, during a crisis, I put out a creditable four-page newsletter for the American First Day Cover Society using Microsoft Word. Our editor was dying after a stroke and COVID-19, we had had no journal for months and the election deadline was fast approaching. It was "publish or perish" at its most literal.

I have never written, edited or published for print professionally. My only print experience was in high school and later in stamp collecting. My aptly-named B.S. degree, *magna cum fortuna*, was in television production with a minor in music. By that criterion, I'm qualified to produce "Donnie and Marie," not a philatelic publication.

What is required to be a stamp society editor is some basic proficiency in English and writing, which nearly all of us reading this have. The hardest part of the job may be getting issues out on time. If the publication is quarterly, that shouldn't be too hard. Great knowledge of the philatelic specialty isn't required. Some stamp societies even offer hono-

ria or stipends to their editors.

Without regular publications of some sort, philatelic groups whose members are spread out geographically die. No journal or newsletter, no organization.

Even WU30 Is In Transition

You already know we have a new editor, Matthew Healey. He will be putting more emphasis on online media; we explicitly invited social media writers, bloggers and website managers to join this group more than a year ago.

We hope to have periodic Zoom "meetings" of WU30, some with specific subjects and others just to gab.

For the first time in my memory, the Writers Unit will have a daily presence at the big summer show, sharing a booth with Boston 2026 at Great American Stamp Show, Aug. 10-13 in Cleveland. Secretary-Treasurer Alan Barasch will "anchor" the table, and Matthew and I expect to spend some time there. We are likely to have recent issues of *The Philatelic Communicator*. Details on the show can be found at www.stamps.org/great-american-stamp-show

We also have four candidates to fill out the WU30 Council:

- Bill DiPaolo
- Daniel Warren
- Len McMaster
- Ken Trettin

For our last election, we received four ballots. Therefore I am declaring Bill, Daniel, Len and Ken elected to the WU30 Council by acclamation, which gives us a total of eight councilors. We are presently scheduled to have a council meeting at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 13, with a general meeting immediately after at 11 o'clock.

Please let me know if there is interesting in attending the latter on Zoom. I have been encouraged to do a simulcast meeting for the AFDCS on Friday, which will give me two days to figure out how to do it better.

Editors on editing

The following comments have been compiled and edited from individual conversations and email exchanges over recent weeks with five prominent philatelic editors: John M. Hotchner, Martin Kent Miller, Susanna Mills, Randy Neil and Wayne Youngblood. Thanks to all of them for taking the time to share their insights and wisdom.

TPC: Briefly, what was your own path to becoming a philatelic editor?

JH: There was a lot about the hobby and its institutions I enjoyed, and a fair amount that I thought needed more work. That led me to write to the editor of *Linn's* to suggest that I write a regular opinion column. My monthly "Philatelic Philosopher" first appeared in 1976.

Luckily, I had in those years two exceptional editors: Ed Neuce and Michael Laurence, both of whom provided much guidance and encouragement. Success at *Linn's* opened other opportunities to write, and then naturally to edit publications. The longest editorial job was as founding editor of *The Philatelic Exhibitor*—for 24 years! I was also writer/editor of the monthly U.S. Postal Service publication *Stamp Fun* for over a million kids in the Ben Franklin Stamp Clubs, and of a companion publication called *Leader Feature* to support the teachers who conducted the clubs.

MM: I collected as a kid, and then got back in as an adult. When Jay Bigalke was leaving the *American Philatelist* in 2017 to return to *Linn's*, my wife showed me the ad for the open editor's position. I'd had a marketing communications firm for 15 years and always encouraged my employees to reevaluate their careers every five years. So I took my own advice and applied. I found I really enjoy the editing process. After I left the *AP* (the winters in Bellefonte!) Roger Brody recruited me to edit the *U.S. Specialist*.

SM: My first job out of college was at the APS. My sister works here too. I started as an archival intern at the APRL, a position sponsored by the U.S.

Philatelic Classics Society, organizing Tom Alexander's research papers. And that grew into a role managing social media, and that grew into being editor.

RN: I patterned myself on Mike Laurence. He can pick up the phone and say, "can you fill this space for me?" He has a stable of helpmates. Twenty-five stalls in his stable and each one holds a Secretariat. He is organized and methodical. And religious about deadlines.

WY: In the 1980s, plate-number coils were just becoming a hit and I thought I could write a column about them. At Capex '87, Ken Lawrence and Steven Rod mentioned that *Linn's* might need someone. I called, Michael Laurence picked up the phone, and he told me to send him some samples. They flew me out for an interview and offered me the job. Mike thought my writing skills needed work but that I had the knowledge—he said, it's easier to turn a collector into an editor than an editor into a collector. I learned so much from working with him and Elaine Boughner, who was such a good teacher.

TPC: What is the number one challenge facing philatelic editors today, and how do you overcome that challenge?

MM: Finding enough to fill the pages. There is a constant need for content. Commercial printers have hard deadlines and you have a set number of

pages to fill.

Also, seeing a number of experienced, accomplished authors dealing with age-related issues. When those you've counted on as anchors begin to falter, it's hard. And we have fewer people willing to get into authoring at the level required by specialty journals.

SM: There's a need for more philatelic editors but also an enormous need for more publication designers and layout specialists with a grounding in philately. There's a backlog of book projects needing people with those skills.

RN: Layout skill is as important as editorial skill. And it's in short supply.

WY: My biggest problem as an editor is finding quality material—sometimes any material. In many of my past editing positions, I had more material than I could handle, but now I'm often out-and-out begging people to write.

Part of the issue is many people are one-shot wonders: they have one article in them and then they're done. Another difficulty is the growth in popularity of exhibiting; exhibiting and writing tend to scratch the same itch. People who do one don't have energy to do the other.

TPC: What do you find to be the most rewarding part of philatelic editing (besides getting paid)?

MM: Two things drive me: helping an author build their confidence and then seeing them submit elsewhere successfully as well. Seeing new authors go a second round. Or, somebody will come to me and say they now read a journal cover to cover, they renewed their membership because of it. The measure of success is the satisfaction of readers.

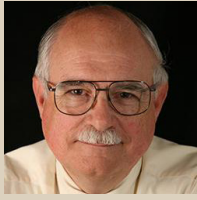
SM: I find that some authors are so knowledgeable that they forget what it's like to be a beginner. I enjoy asking these authors questions to make them think of their article in a different way. Sometimes we go head-to-head and most often they compromise between being erudite and being able to reach their audience.

WY: Being able to help someone better

Keeping the conversation going

Many **TPC** readers are also editors of publications large and small. If you would like to share your experiences, ideas or thoughts on the issues raised here, please drop a line (or several) to: wu30editor@gmail.com for inclusion in the next issue.

We are also scheduling a live roundtable discussion at GASS in August, most likely on the Friday. Details in the next issue, and online as they get settled.



John M. Hotchner

Former editor, *The Philatelic Exhibitor* and USPS's *Stamp Fun*; Columnist, *Linn's Stamp News* et al.



Martin Kent Miller

Editor, *Topical Time*, *First Days*, *U.S. Specialist*, *The Philatelic Exhibitor*, *Pennsylvania Postal Historian*



Susanna Mills

Editor, *American Philatelist*, *Philatelic Literature Review*



Randy Neil

Founder & editor, *Kelleher's Stamp Collector's Quarterly*; former editor, *American Stamp Dealer & Collector*



Wayne Youngblood

Editor, *Collectors Club Philatelist*, *ASC&D*, *Civil War Philatelist*; former editor, *Scott Stamp Monthly*, *Topical Time*, others.

express their thoughts. The acknowledgement of people coming back and saying because they wrote a piece for me, certain things happened for them because of my being a hardworking “word janitor.”

TPC: *What advice would you offer to publications that are struggling to find writers today? Where can organizations turn to find untapped talent?*

JH: Look at the philatelic literature competitions, particularly the international ones. I judged three shows in the last four years, with 80 to 150 participants in each. There is talent out there. Many in the international philatelic world would be happy to belong to or work with an American organization. It is still considered prestigious.

MM: Any time I can, I stand up in front of a crowd and say, Write! Write! Write! It works—in the last 30 days, I’ve had six authors who never wrote before step forward and say, Martin, you said you’d help me get this into shape.

RN: Writers hunt new writers. It’s all about the serendipity of connections. You meet someone at a show, ask about their contacts, stir up the bushes—find people who’re scared to try writing. But once they try it, they love it.

We have somebody now [at *Kelleher's Quarterly*] who collects Liberia, but he writes about Southeast Asia for us, and

he’s terrific. He just keeps on going.

WY: There are a lot of knowledgeable collectors who aren’t part of organized philately. One writer [Lin Yangchen, author of an award-winning series in the *Collectors Club Philatelist*] I found because he was posting on social media.

It’s not hard for someone to write 200 to 500 words on a favorite item. Then once they get their feet wet, you nurture them to do more.

TPC: *What about philatelic editing? Where can organizations find editors?*

MM: We need a serious effort towards an “editor’s track” in the YPLF [APS Young Philatelic Leaders Fellowship]. We need to reach out to accomplished writers and help them make the transition. And focus on the design aspect. I emphasize that we are in a highly visual hobby. Making attractive pages, using the best possible images, is so important. Technology is making content more accessible at a higher rate of speed.

RN: Consider that most people who’ve been writers would love to be editors. Once someone gets started, they feel compelled to keep producing. The question is, are you cut out for this job? Will you love it when you’re doing it?

WY: The problem with a lot of small specialty journals is they’re not able to pay. And that makes it hard to bring in someone who’s saying, ‘What’s in it

for me?’ Someone older may be happy to do it as a volunteer, as a way to give something back to the hobby, but that won’t necessarily work for a younger person. You have to step up for them.

JH: The hobby can’t depend on freebies anymore. If you want somebody good, you gotta pay them! A good editor will bring in advertisers—there’s no reason a publication shouldn’t be a money-maker for the organization that produces it.

SM: I receive a lot of emails from societies looking for new editors and asking for recommendations and I hear from a lot of people looking for folks to edit or proofread their books. These are all paid roles. There are not a lot of people in the hobby ready to take those roles, but you don’t necessarily have to be an expert to be a philatelic editor. You just need to know how to ask the right questions.

TPC: *Give us your prognosis for the future of philatelic writing and editing.*

JH: It is up to us, the current generation, to recruit and nurture the next.

SM: I think the future looks good, but it will involve a lot of work from people who are editors now to support the next generation. The population is aging, and a lot of knowledge could be lost.

In the big picture, editors have a responsibility to foster young writers, to help shape the hobby and to tear down

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Literary mystery

Continued from page 1

Guinea, and I pondered them over and over again when we returned to Saipan, where I would lie in my tent and think with intense longing of the recent past—that is to say, my early years.

“During the philatelic period of my late childhood only a few years before, a phase that followed my obsession with raising pigeons, I had somehow come to own a moderately rare stamp from ‘Elobey, Annobón, and Corisco.’ By moderately rare I mean that the Scott catalog priced the one I owned, a used specimen, at \$2.75, which in those Depression days was a large enough sum to make a small boy’s stomach squirm pleasurably, totally apart from the aesthetic pleasure of the stamp itself. A note in my album revealed that ‘Elobey, Annobón, and Corisco’ was under the governance of Spain, more specifically Spanish Guinea. The stamp portrayed a ‘vignette,’ as Scott always described the world’s scenic views, of a mountain peak and palm trees and fishing boats in a tropical harbor; the general coloration was green and blue (or, according to Scott with its painterly precision, viridian and aquamarine), and there was a title beneath: Los Pescadores. Keen-eyed, I had no trouble picking out the fishermen themselves, who were Negroes and wore white turbans and were busy at work tending their nets against a backdrop of aquamarine harbor and viridian mountains, behind which the sun appeared to be setting...”

OK, let’s pause right here. Lovely and precise as this description is, there are a couple of problems, the most glaring being that the Spanish colony of Elobey, Annobón and Corisco only ever issued monochrome stamps depicting a single subject: a profile head of King Alfonso XIII of Spain, as a child or as a youth.

The islands, covering only a few square miles and with a population in 1910 (according to Scott) of just under

3,000 people, nonetheless issued some 60 definitives between 1903 and 1909—if you count all the overprints, as Scott does. After 1909, the islands switched to using stamps of Spanish Guinea.

Spanish Guinea did issue some pictorials later on, though none quite matches Styron’s idyllic scene. So what stamp was he thinking of?

That young Bill had some familiarity with the postage stamps of the world is abundantly clear from the paragraph that follows:

“There were other stamps in my collection that I greatly admired—a huge Greek airmail in gorgeous pastel facets, rather like stained glass; a gaudy number from Guatemala featuring a quetzal bird with streaming tail feathers; a glossy octagonal from Hejaz festooned with Arabic script; the Nyasaland triangle, shaped to accommodate spindly-legged giraffes—but none so arrested my imagination or so whetted my longing for faraway places as the one from that archipelago whose name itself was an incantation: Elobey, Annobón, and Corisco.”

We can see what’s going on here, and it’s perfectly forgivable. We know exactly which set of Greek airmails Styron is thinking of; there are several Guatemalan issues that match his description; no Hejaz octagonal exists, but the Turkish army did issue an eight-sided set for Thessaly, and the exotic calligraphy of the two places lends itself to confusion; and while Nyasaland never had giraffes or triangles, neighboring Portuguese Nyassa sure did and the two are easy to mix up, so I’d say Styron’s off the hook there, too.

The old man’s recollection of Scott’s “painterly” color names is slightly wide of the mark: viridian is not in the catalog publisher’s vocabulary, and aquamarine is used far less commonly than ultramarine, but here, too, I’m inclined

to give old Bill a pass. None of his transgressions of recollection undermine the universal truth of this nugget:

“In the tent, half drowsing in the wicked heat, I would convert my identity into that of a small boy again, re-creating in memory ever younger incarnations of myself. In the stamp collection sequence, for example, it would be Sunday afternoon: sprawled on the crimson rug I would lick little cellophane hinges while my mother...

read the sepia-tinted roto-gravure section of the *New York Times*, and my father, seated at the antique walnut secretary, penned one of his innumerable letters...”

What true collector has not, either occasionally or frequently, experienced such an immersion, transported by stamps back to their happy childhood and a vivid reminiscence about long-lost afternoons with their collection? In this

short tale, Styron perfectly synthesizes the magic of our hobby: the respite it so often provides from the demands and stresses of our adult lives.

And yet, I can’t help but come back to my original question: what stamp was Styron thinking of when he described in such specific detail his \$2.75 rarity from Elobey, Annobón and Corisco?

Was this stamp just a vivid hallucination, distilled from childhood hours riffling through a worldwide album, a pure invention like one of those AI-spawned images we see nowadays? Or was it a simple conflation, in his aging mind, of a real stamp from some other place with the mantra-like name of the Spanish colony? If so, which one?

On the facing page are a few candidates for the stamp Styron may have had in mind. None, however, is an exact match for his description. If any reader can think of another, please drop a line to wu30editor@gmail.com and I’ll share it in the next issue. —MH



Problem: the stamps of Elobey, Annobón and Corisco never depicted fishermen.

Stamps we can readily identify in William Styron's short story...



"Greek airmail in gorgeous pastel facets"



"quetzal bird with streaming tail feathers"



"glossy octagonal...festooned with Arabic script"



"...triangle, shaped to accommodate spindly-legged giraffes"

...and some candidates for the one we can't (with disqualifying notes):



Spanish Guinea, 1929
(no mountains or fishermen; not valuable enough)



Spanish Guinea, 1949
(monochrome, issued post-WW2)



New Caledonia, 1928
(not remotely worth \$2.75 even today, let alone in the 1930s)



Gilbert and Ellice Islands, 1939
(a possibility... though it lacks mountains and fishing nets)



ABOUT THAT COVER PHOTO

William Styron did not like to be photographed in his private writer's room at his home on Martha's Vineyard. This image is a rare exception.

William Waterway Marks was the publisher and editor of *Martha's Vineyard Magazine*, and he visited Styron at his home in 1989 and took this photograph. The image can now be found on Wikimedia Commons, where it is free to be copied as long as attribution is given.

Marks described the scene:

"Styron's writing room was in an inconspicuous location between the kitchen and garage. This room had

only one mullioned window at eye level above his writing desk. Styron's writing desk was purchased at a yard sale on Martha's Vineyard. Styron always wrote long hand. He liked the tactile feel of pencil in hand which he felt helped him to connect his thoughts to paper. Styron had a manual pencil sharpener which he used to sharpen about fifteen pencils. Before he began to write, he sharpened a bunch of pencils, which allowed him to write without interruption."

A manuscript and pile of pencils (but alas, no stamps) can be seen in the lower part of the picture. —MH

Advice on getting started, from 50 years ago

Lee S. Waterman (of the Editorial Board of the American First Day Cover Society) wrote an article in the September-October 1969 issue of *First Days* titled “The Technical Aspects of

John M. Hotchner

Writing a Philatelic Article.” It goes on for three 6x9-inch pages.

Though a bit dated, it is a useful piece, with a major theme: “It is this author’s conviction that the secret of successful writing is really rewriting.”

I’d argue that this may not be so much the case for experienced writers. Waterman says that his advice is for novices who might like to write for *First Days*, but don’t know how to get started.

He continues with good advice that applies to all of us, not just novices: “Begin your article by writing down

your material in the order that it comes to mind. Whenever you change the subject, begin a new paragraph. Avoid long and complicated constructions. Keep your sentences clear and concise. Your first draft will be finished when you’ve written everything that initially occurs to you about your topic.”

The experienced writer may well be close to final when their first draft is done, but for the novice, Waterman says, “You are now ready to begin a series of revisions which will ultimately produce a polished article. Read your first draft aloud; hearing how it sounds is the first step to uncovering many of your grammatical shortcomings. Make as many on-the-spot revisions as possible. Correct spelling errors; transpose words; add words when necessary to

clarify; subdivide long, rambling sentences; and delete excess verbiage.”

The article goes on with practical advice like this, and some of it actually bears a read by those of us who have been at our typewriters/computer screens for a while. For that reason, I am happy to offer a full copy of the article to any Writer’s Unit member who would like it; either hard copy or as a computer scan. Contact me at: jmhstamp@verizon.net, or at P.O. Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125.

My thanks to Lloyd de Vries, who was able to provide the last page of the article, missing from my copy.

Lloyd replies: the First Days Digital Archive, all 467 issues 1955-2022 in PDF form, is \$79 from www.afdcs.org/FDarchive.html

Philatelic Exporter calls it quits

The *Philatelic Exporter*, one of Britain’s leading national philatelic magazines and the main one devoted to the trade, on Feb. 1 announced its own demise on Twitter.

Published monthly since 1945, the *PE* was lately under the umbrella of Stanley Gibbons, the leading catalog and album producers and the publishers of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, which is continuing.

“Due to the challenging economic

conditions, the difficult decision has been taken to cease publication,” the tweet read in part.

Brian Lund, who wrote a monthly feature on picture-postcard collecting for the magazine, bemoaned the loss in a public Facebook post on Feb. 23.

“*PE*’s disappearance is part of a seemingly inexorable trend towards the demise of hard copy magazines in all areas and countries,” he wrote, noting hobbyists nowadays connect online.

Paying your dues

To ensure that our organization functions smoothly and gives all its members the best bang for the buck, it helps if we all pay our dues on time and in the most efficient manner. At just \$15 annually, ours is one of the best bargains in philately! While a good, old-fashioned paper check will always do, WU30 also accepts nifty, 21st century methods such as PayPal:

www.paypal.com/paypalme/apswu30

Twelve members have already opted for this fast, painless method in the current year. If choosing this method, please be sure to **add 75¢** to your remittance to cover the inevitable PayPal fees. #thankyou

Secretary-Treasurer’s Quarterly Report

As of 31 January 2023, the Writers Unit has 120 members and comp entities on the books, broken down as follows:

- 25 members past due
- 63 paid through 2023
- 18 paid through 2024
- 4 paid through 2025
- 1 paid through 2026
- 1 paid through 2032
- 8 comp or honorary

Bank balance on 31 January was \$8,659.36.

During 2022, we signed up three new members:

- 2072 Susanna Mills
- 2073 John A. Gehrig
- 2074 George T. Smith

Dues notices went out 1 January 2023 with some slight expenses for postage and printing. Followup notices were sent out later in February.

Respectfully,

Alan Barasch, Secretary-Treasurer

Lichtenstein Award winners for 2023 have one thing in common—they're all prolific writers

When the Collectors Club on Jan. 11 announced this year's winners of the Alfred F. Lichtenstein Award for Distinguished Service to Philately, it noted that all three—Trish Kaufmann, Randy Neil and Charles Verge—are prominent philatelic writers, editors and/or publishers. (On Feb. 16, it was announced that Kaufmann would be joining Neil and Verge as a signatory of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists.)

That should surprise no one.

Every stamp tells a story, as the saying goes, and readers of this newsletter know that our calling is to do the telling.

Over the course of her 50-plus years as a leading expert on Confederate philately, Kaufmann has penned hundreds of articles, monographs, blog posts and presentations. Neil began his philatelic writing career in the mid-1950s, with a youth column in the *Weekly Philatelic Gossip* and another for *First Days*, the journal of the American First Day Cover Society. He has been writing and editing nonstop ever since. Verge is the author of four books on philately, including one on Canada's St. Lawrence Seaway invert, and the former stamp columnist for the *Ottawa Citizen*.

In talking with each of the three, what comes through most, besides their obvious passion for philately, is their passion for learning and then sharing that learning as far and wide as possible.

"I could stop being a dealer today," Kaufmann told me. "I could not stop



(Top-bottom): Trish Kaufmann, Randy Neil and Charles Verge.

being a writer."

Hand-in-hand with writing, of course, is the need to be constantly reading and researching. "I can't *not* research!" she added.

Neil has the unusual distinction of

them are writing. Do they turn away because they don't see themselves welcomed or represented?

We need to make this a more visibly welcoming place, and follow through when people show potential.

WY: I'm concerned. We will still have print publications, but not enough new

having started not one but two successful philatelic magazines, including the one he currently helms, *Kelleher's Stamp Collector's Quarterly*. He has produced 33 issues since Vol. 1, No. 1 appeared in the fall of 2015 and although he is now in his 80s, his goal is to take the magazine to at least its 50th issue.

Verge is a historian by training, with a background in museums. "I find it interesting to do research in history," he said, "And bring in things nobody would have thought of," such as inputs from genealogy. "It's important to paint

a broad picture." He sees his mission in philately as helping to organize and promote activities such as exhibiting, in which he is involved as an international judge, and through his writing. —MH

Editors on editing

Continued from page 5
the barriers to entry.

Some barriers are a self-fulfilling prophecy. Stamp collecting is perceived as a "men's club." There are plenty of young women in the hobby, but few of

people to handle them. I'm constantly turning down requests. We need to help develop the necessary skills. There are a lot of people out there who don't realize they would enjoy editing.

MIM: This may be heresy, but I think we should be considering some consolidation of publications.

Letters

wu30editor@gmail.com

Stamp Insider still online, via the Wayback Machine

Matthew, welcome as the new Editor of TPC. Wishing you all the best.

I am a member of the Writers Unit and a past contributor. Currently, I am the editor and publisher of three



postal history journals: *Georgia Post Roads*, the *Florida Postal History Journal*, and the *North Carolina Postal Historian*.

I wrote a “Stamp In-Sites” column for about six years beginning in 2013 for the now defunct *Stamp Insider*, the journal of the Northeast Federation of Stamp Clubs. The *Stamp Insider* no longer exists. The editor/publisher, Al Starkweather, died in 2020 and was not replaced. The best way to access the now defunct stampinsider.org is to use the Wayback Machine [archive.org], where you can find PDF copies of *Stamp Insider* issues.

Steve Swain
Roswell, Ga.

More than quarterly?

I am responding to your low-tech survey.

I like the present format. As a PDF file, it's easier to save the newsletter in its entirety, such as to read on a tablet, or to save particular pages. For example, I saved pages 6 and 7 of the fourth-quarter 2022 newsletter as a “Begging for Articles” file in the stamp-club-newsletter folder on my computer.

Also, a schedule of more frequent publication than quarterly would be great, if you can find content.

Ron Breznay
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Evolve or die

Continued from page 3

atelic Communicator in 1994 (ancient times, pre-internet), bemoaned the rapid decline of philatelic writing in the mainstream press:

“And just by way of bearing sad news, do we realize what we have lost in recent weeks? The only approach to philately that the mass of non-collectors has had is the printed word. Radio and television programs on philately have never gotten very far, and a lecture, display, or exhibit aimed at the unwashed public rarely gets visitors. But look what has happened in the past twelve months:

Hobbies magazine is now *Antiques and Leisure*, a more fitting title. For a quarter-century, I did a monthly stamp column for it that readers liked. My column has been discontinued since a survey showed that not many subscribers followed it.

The Miami Herald, one of the South's leading papers, had a weekly stamp column. When it was discontinued last year, my letter to them brought a reply that “stamp collecting as a popular hobby is on the way out.”

Charles Hahn, who did the stamp column in *The Chicago Sun Times*, was let go after decades of bringing competent philatelic news to its readers. And *The New York Times*, which in the past has boasted of wonderful writers such as Kent Stiles, David Lidman, and others, for Christmas told the present stamp editor, Barth Healey, that his services were no longer required.

Philately has suffered a bad blow from these happenings. It would seem that the hopes we once had that the non-philatelic press might be our best means of bringing our hobby to the attention of the public were not fulfilled.”

What was going on? Simply put, it was a vicious cycle between the perceived decline of interest in philately and unfortunate steps by the main-

stream media that reduced its exposure. But the real fault, to paraphrase Shakespeare, was not in our media but in ourselves. Even in the 1980s, our hobby had begun to change, yet its institutions failed to react. *The New York Times* cut not just its stamp column but its coin column, its photography column and its audiophile column. It wasn't personal; it was strictly business. Bottom line was, philately, like the other hobbies, didn't have strong advocates and was no longer pulling in sufficient ad revenue for the papers. Who was to blame for that?

There was much handwringing among philatelic writers in the 1980s and 90s about competition from video games and Pokémon cards, but most of them failed to identify the true culprit: the stamp hobby was changing—heck, stamps themselves were changing—but our hobby's institutions weren't.

We have long debated amongst ourselves whether it is more productive to keep our communications focused within the hobby or to try to appeal to a broader audience that includes non-collectors. I personally favor the latter. It may be harder, but it has greater long-term benefits for our hobby's “brand.”

So what do we need to do today? In a nutshell, start afresh. Rethink our institutions from the ground up. Look around at the stamp world of today and give it what it wants, not what we fondly remember the stamp world of 1973 wanting. Come up with new models for our societies, shows and publications. Then evangelize the heck out of it—especially online.

Writers must play a big role in this. We are the storytellers—the ones with the ideas, perceptiveness, and ability to persuade. We must use these skills.

My goal for this newsletter in the coming months and years will be to showcase fresh faces and innovative ideas that I believe are helping take philately in the right direction. There are lots of them out there. Stay tuned.

Here's to the future of philately!

Book Review

Local postal history, done the right way

This monograph is the fourth in the current series of focused studies by the U.S. postal history publisher La Posta. Previous works were *Independent State Mail and Confederate Use of U.S. Postage, How Secession Occurred* by

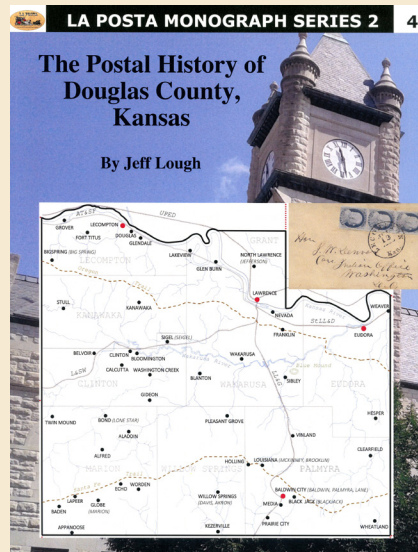
Alan Warren

Patricia Kaufmann, *19th Century American Genre Paintings: Reading Newspapers in Tavern Post Offices* by Diane

DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris, and *The Postal History of St. Simons Island, Georgia* by Steve Swain.

The latest volume is a detailed discussion and listing of the post offices in Douglas County, Kansas, which is also the home of the University of Kansas. The details include the post offices that have operated in the county over the years with dates of opening/closing, name changes, and the postmasters by town.

The author, Jeff Lough, resides in Douglas County, but he is engaged in the study of the postal history of the entire state. He presents a short overview of the history of the state and then focuses on the postal operations in Douglas County, named for U.S. senator



The Postal History of Douglas County, Kansas by Jeff Lough.

La Posta Publications, 2022. Size 8½ by 11 inches, 88 pages, perfect bound. \$37.95 plus \$5 shipping to USA addresses. La Posta Publications, PO Box 6074, Fredericksburg VA 22403, or www.lapostapub.com

Stephen A. Douglas. The first chapter lists 25 pioneer post offices of the county in operation during the period 1855 to 1861. Of these, only three survive today: Eudora, Lawrence, and Lecompton.

Each of the ten current townships is examined with a study of the post offices in alphabetical sequence. A short history of each facility is revealed using maps,

photographs, and sometimes mail with the appropriate postal markings. In many cases author Lough points out that no mail survives from some of the early offices.

Railroads were established in the 19th century that ran through Douglas County and Railroad Post Offices (RPOs) are mentioned. One chapter is devoted to the five post offices that operate in the county today: Baldwin City, Eudora, Lawrence, Jayhawk Station, and Lecompton. Their zip codes, current photographs, operating hours, and postmarks are shown.

Some 22 end-notes supplement the text. One appendix lists all of the Douglas County post offices from 1854 to 2021 together with the names of their first postmasters. Another appendix lists the towns alphabetically with the names of all of the postmasters, and the dates they were appointed, in chronological order. Post office name changes and those dates of change are included. An extensive bibliography and list of acknowledgments identify information sources.

The text is very legible, and the illustrations are nicely placed. This monograph is an example of county post office history that sets a standard for such studies. Presumably the author can use the same approach for other counties in his home state.

Classifieds

Writers Unit 30 members and non-members alike may place classified ads at no charge by emailing the editor at: wu30editor@gmail.com

The Stuart Rossiter Trust supports research and publication relating to the history of communication through postal systems of the world. Can we

help you with publishing your Postal History book or monograph? Contact the trust by email to: srtcrr@gmail.com

Picture Postcard Annual (UK) available now at £9.95. The 2023 edition features dealer and auction house listing, club contact details, early posting dates and auction records. Also a diary of postcard fairs and auctions for the year, and lots of feature articles. Visit: postcardcollecting.co.uk/books

Volunteers needed at GASS (Great American Stamp Show) beginning Aug. 8, for all areas but especially exhibit mounting and dismounting. Details and signup: stamps.org/great-american-stamp-show/volunteer – or call (814) 933-3803 Ext. 209.

12th Annual Volunteer Work Week takes place at the American Stamp Center in Bellefonte, PA July 17-21, 2023. To find out how you can give back to

the hobby, meet new friends and have fun, visit: stamps.org/learn/volunteer-work-week

A.P.S. Summer Seminar takes place June 12-15. Early registration is now open: save \$50 if you sign up before Mar. 31. Study stamp technology with Wayne Youngblood, learn research tips from Dan Piazza and more! Visit: stamps.org/learn/on-the-road-courses/summer-seminar or email learning@stamps.org

Lit Palmares: Grand Award to Fiset, Robinson

This year's literature competition, co-sponsored by **Writers Unit 30**, was held Jan. 20-22 at the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition. It was once again restricted to philatelic articles. News-



paper and magazine columns were eligible, as were articles appearing in either philatelic or non-philatelic media. All entries were judged according

to the A.P.S. *Manual of Literature Judging and Exhibiting* (2021). Bill DiPaolo served as the literature exhibit chairman.

The Grand Award was given to **Louis Fiset** and **James Robinson** for "Gum Breakers," which appeared as a chapter in "U.S. Fourth Bureau Issues," published in 2022 by the United States Stamp Society. The Reserve Grand Award went to **Jean R. Walton** for "What Are 'Star Routes' and Why Were They Created," an article in *NJPH*, the journal of the New Jersey Postal History Society.

Jerry Miller took home the Postal History Society Award while **Bill DiPaolo** won the Collectors Club of Sarasota Award for Treatment, both for articles in the 2022 *Congress Book*.

Fiset and Robinson also won the A.P.S. Research Award for "Gum Breakers."

LARGE GOLD

Louis Fiset and **James Robinson**, "Gum Breakers" chapter, *U.S. Fourth Bureau Issues*
Patricia Kaufmann, "A Cammann Imprint

Discovery That Changed a Catalog Listing Plus Insights on Dr. James T. Paterson"
Civil War Philatelist

Jean R. Walton, "What are 'Star Routes' and Why Were They Created?" *NJPH, The Journal of the New Jersey Postal History Society*

Bill DiPaolo, "Thomas Edison and the Bulb" *Congress Book*

Peter Schwartz and **Calvin Mitchell**, "Tobacco Stamps of 1868-1869 and African American Portraiture" *American Philatelist*

GOLD

Jerry Miller, "From Duplex to Mechanical: The Evolution of Experimental & Early Postmarks Worldwide in the 19th & 20th Centuries—A Primer" *Congress Book*

Ralph Nafziger, "On the Oregon Trail" *United States Specialist*

Hugh Lawrence, "The Centrally Produced Issues of the East China People's Post" *The China Clipper*

Jean R. Walton, "The Story of Jean Pierre Blanchard: America's First Air Mail to Deptford, NJ" *NJPH, The Journal of the New Jersey Postal History Society*

Vernon R. Morris, "Military Ft. Meyers From 1850" *Florida Postal History Journal*

Ed Fraser, "The Elusive Canadian WW2 Thomas Cook Undercover Mail Scheme That Used Box 615 in Lisbon to Link With Nazi Europe" *The Posthorn*

LARGE VERMEIL

Wendy Buckle, "What a Waste! How Postal Systems Dealt with Paper Shortages" *Philateli-Graphics*

Kurt Streepy, "1924 Arms Issue of Panama" *Canal Zone Philatelist*

Heinrich Köhler/GPN. *The area features booths for the Frankfurt, Hamburg and Wuppertal philatelic libraries.*

More info at:
ibra2023.de/en/programm-en/literaturbereich-en/

Aug. 10-13: Great American Stamp Show, Cleveland, Ohio. *Literature prospectus and entry form may be found*

VERMEIL

Robert Rose, "Paterson, N.J. 19th Century Advertising Covers" *NJPH, The Journal of the New Jersey Postal History Society*

Pat Malarkey-Stallard and **Jack Malarkey**, "St. Joseph, Fl." *Florida Postal History Journal*

Charles J. DiComo, "H.H. Warner & Co. 'Safe Remedies' Major Double Transfer of Central Vignette on 6¢ Medicine Stamp" *The American Revenuer*

Charles J. DiComo and **Terry Shaw**, "A One-Day Wonder: Name of Post Office on Long Island Became 'Jones Beach' for a Single Day" *The Excelsior!*

Igor Grigorian, "The Crown of Hungary: Was It Prepared for the Armenian King?" *Topical Time*

Ed Fraser & Kolbjorn Schjolberg, "A 1940 Unopened 'Box 252' Letter From Norway" *The Posthorn*

SILVER

Juan Riera, "The Sikorsky S-38 in the British West Indies" *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*

Stuart Van Leer Bradley, Jr., "Hiroshige's 53 Stations of the Tokaido Woodblock Prints" *Philateli-Graphics*

SILVER BRONZE

Juan Riera, "The Bahamian Hotel for International Businessmen, Royalty...and Spies" *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*

Richard Lomax, "State Revenue Stamps of Florida: An Introduction" *Florida Postal History Journal*

BRONZE

William Schultz and **Mark Schwartz**, "The Real Epilogue" *American Stamp Collector & Dealer*

at: stamps.org/great-american-stamp-show/exhibitor-information
The entry deadline is May 5.

Nov. 17-19: Chicagopex, Chicago, Ill.
Keep an eye on: chicagopex.org

Nov. 25-26: NZ National Philatelic Literature Exhibition, Christchurch, New Zealand. *Info: cps.gen.nz/page/442611*

Calendar of philatelic literature exhibits, 2023

May 25-28: IBRA, Essen, Germany (*entries now closed*). *Attendees at continental Europe's sole major international this year can spend time browsing the approximately 200 literature entries in a 1,600-sq-ft reading area sponsored by*