

ACROSS THE FENCE



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Newsletter of the Wisconsin Federation of Stamp Clubs

American Philatelic Society Chapter #350, American Topical Association Chapter #107

President's corner

Salvage Project

By Maurice D. Wozniak, President of WFSC

At a recent meeting of my stamp club, one of my fellow members revealed that he had tried to send an announcement using an old postal card but got it back from his post office because it was too small.

Fortunately, he announced, he was able to get a refund.

I was incredulous. I thought the post office employee must have made a mistake.

But no, it turns out he was right. Current postal regulations are specific about the size ranges for postal cards, and the templates exclude most of the postal cards in the first 100 years of production. By default these cards have been effectively demonetized.

Over the years, I have accumulated a stack of old postal cards, and I've used them from time to time to send informal mail with the addition of enough postage to equal current rates.

Postal cards were the original Twitter or Facebook – a means of keeping in touch quickly and easily with friends, customers and family. In my own collection, I have cards acknowledging or asking for orders of goods, reporting the receipt of a letter and promising to respond in more detail later. Others describe health conditions, announce the cancellation of a lesson that very afternoon and suggesting another lesson the next week.

Today, a telephone call to an answering machine or an email note will do the trick, so use of postal cards seems to be way down, judging from the number I find in my mailbox. Most involve some sort of advertising.

Acceptable postal cards today have to be between five and six inches long, and 3½ to 4½ inches tall, I learned when I asked a postal clerk. Almost every card produced since the oversized Tourism Year of the Americas set of

1972 fits into those parameters. The 6c John Hanson and the 8c Samuel Adams cards of 1972 and '73 do not, for example.

Most of the cards produced earlier than that are either too long or too short, notably the ubiquitous 1c green Jefferson of 1914 and the 2c red Franklin of 1951. Again, because these cards are unmailable, they have effectively been demonetized, even though that move was never officially made by the United States Postal Service.

Several of my early cards have a catalog value high enough to make me want to save them for possible trade or sale to other collectors. Aside from some exceptional varieties, most of the unused cards from 1951 forward have catalog values of only 25c to 50c, and there is no real demand at those prices, so I determined to sell them back to the USPS, which produced them and then made their use improper.

It's instructive, I think, when gauging the popularity of postal card use, to note that most contemporaneously used postal cards carry catalog values more than 10 times higher than the mint versions.

Now, I don't like to do business without knowing my rights, so I tried to find the applicable section in the *Domestic Mail Manual*. When I struck out, I asked Wayne Youngblood for help, and he was able to direct me to Section 9.0, "Refunds and Exchanges."

Sure enough, as I recalled, the manual specified that if the USPS was at fault in selling unserviceable material it would exchange stamps at full postage value. There were some provisos: no cash refunds, only recent stamps, and submissions had to be in lots of at least 50.

In general, I thought the rules were fair, and I could argue my way around the conditions if I had to. Furthermore, if I didn't like the postmaster's decision, I could appeal to the USPS Consumer Advocate.

When asking for guidance in this matter, I also had consulted a dealer friend who I thought might have had some experience in redeeming damaged stamps. He warned that the rules were cumbersome and daunting, but all post offices and personnel were not alike in their interpretation of the rules.

On my next trip to the post office I brought a



Most U.S. postal cards created during their first 100 years are no longer mailable.

few postal cards with me. The clerk consulted with a supervisor. The subsequent exchange went smoothly, and I returned home with five 44c stamps instead of the useless cards.

Then I set about stacking my accumulated cards by denomination in groups of 10 and making an accounting that I would present at the post office window for exchange. Each time I turned in some cards it took awhile, and I'm sure the people in line behind me wished the transaction would go faster – but I think postal clerks are used to lines.

One aspect of this exchange is that I could turn in pre-printed (but unused) cards and the unused portions of message-and-reply cards.

In the end, I got rid of many unusable postal cards that otherwise would have provided only clutter and annoyance. In their place I have perfectly usable postage stamps and an appreciation of the value of the stamp club experience. After all, if I hadn't learned that old postal cards couldn't be used I'd still have them around.

Inside this issue:

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Clubs are Trump

By Maurice D. Wozniak, President of WFSC

Giving members a chance to acquire items for their collections is a sure-fire way to build attendance at meetings. Many clubs purchase large "mystery boxes" from dealers and then break down the contents into lots for club auctions. **Central Wisconsin Stamp Club**, Plover and Wisconsin Rapids, might have 50 lots with a catalog value exceeding \$1,000, for example. The proceeds then can be used to buy another lot and pay for other club activities.

Some, such as the **Northwoods Philatelic Society**, Iron Mountain, Mich., encourage members to add their own items to the mix. The club has tried to keep the length of the auction under control by limiting members to five personal lots, reducing the opening bids asked, and not having reverse "Dutch auctions" when lots get no interest.

Badger Stamp Club, Madison, has a members' auction at most of its meetings.

Another source of philatelic items for members is a Dealers Night, at which club members who also act as dealers bring items from their

Getting club information into AFTP

To make sure your stamp club's activities and information are noted in the "Clubs are Trump" section of *Across the Fence Post*, please send newsletters or other information to President Maurice Wozniak, 1010 Berlin St., Waupaca, WI 54981 (mwoz@live.com).

Submissions of club news may be sent directly to the editor.

stock for sale. **Badger**, the **Outagamie Philatelic Society**, Appleton, and **Waukesha County Philatelic Society**, Waukesha, do this as well. Ahead of time, members are encouraged to ask for specific areas or items in which they are interested.

A business meeting and perhaps a short program would be appropriate at these "transaction" meetings, but the acquisition and exchange of philatelic items are the main focus.

* * *

Program ideas

A **Badger Stamp Club** member presented a program on *Graf Zeppelin* and *Hindenburg* covers and memorabilia.

The **Northwoods Philatelic Society**, Iron Mountain, Mich., filled out ballots for the annual stamp popularity poll by *Linn's Stamp News*. It's an interesting and appropriate way to use a club meeting.

* * *

What others are doing

The **Kettle Moraine Coin and Stamp Club**, West Bend, celebrated the 46th anniversary of the club and the 20th anniversary of its Ben Franklin youth club. The youngsters presented a program on the scope and direction of their interest in the hobby.

Rob Henak is trying to reconstruct records and artifacts of the **Milwaukee Philatelic Society**, many of which had been lost. He pleaded in the club's newsletter, "It would help tremendously if others with older M.P.S. items could provide me with photographs, scans or

photocopies and some explanation or background about the items."

Carol Schutta, M.P.S. secretary and newsletter editor, commented, "Each and every stamp I wrote about [to introduce new issues in the newsletter] taught me a lot of history. I hope you got something out of these articles too."

A member of **Central Wisconsin Stamp Club**, who was on a Caribbean cruise when the Haiti earthquake hit, told members that crew members scurried around checking the lifeboats in case of a subsequent tsunami, but one did not occur.

Information for "Clubs Are Trump" is gathered from club newsletters. Please send newsletters to Maurice D. Wozniak, 1010 Berlin St., Waupaca WI 54981.

Across the Fence Post Ad Rates (revised 1/06)

Type Size	Commercial Rate	Club Rate
A Full page (7 1/4"x(9 1/2")	\$42.00	\$33.75
B Half page (7 1/4' x 4 3/4")	\$26.25	\$21.00
C Large 1/4 page (4 3/4"x 6")	\$20.50	\$16.50
D Medium 1/4 page (4 3/4" x 3 3/4")	\$14.75	\$11.75
E 1/8 page (2 1/4" x 3 3/4")	\$7.50	\$6.00
F Econo Ad (2 1/4" x 2 3/4")	\$3.75	\$3.00
G Reduced Business Card (2 1/4" x 1 1/4")	\$2.75	\$2.25
H Back page (7 1/4" x 9 1/2")	\$57.75	N/A

Please make checks payable to :W.F.S.C.

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Across the Fence Post is the official publication of the Wisconsin Federation of Stamp Clubs, Inc., a 501c3 non-profit organization. WFSC also is a life member of the APS (since 1953). For more information about WFSC, please contact the Central Office.

AFTP is published monthly September through April, and every other month May through August (10 issues per year). News of Wisconsin collectors, club news and gratis original philatelic features are welcomed. The editor accepts submissions in any format, but prefers email if possible. Editor reserves the right to make editorial changes to submitted copy.

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Submission deadlines for editorial and advertising materials are for the 1st of the month preceding month of publication (i.e. Jan. 1 for Feb. issue).

All show calendar information, along with all other editorial matter and listings, should be sent to: Wayne L. Youngblood, Editor AFTP, P.O. Box 111, Scandinavia WI 54977-0111. (youngblood@tds.net) phone: 715-467-4416.

Advertising material and payment should be sent to Dave Carney, Advertising Manager, AFTP, P.O. Box 55, Kimberly, WI 54136-0055. (dcarney@new.rr.com) phone: 920-687-9077. For a complete list of advertising rates and policies (display, classified and listings), request a copy from the advertising manager.

Exhibiting 101: BASIC PRESENTATION

By Robert R. Henak

My last couple of articles provided an overview of the types of exhibiting categories that are available and discussed considerations in choosing an appropriate subject for your exhibit. This article will begin addressing general issues of presentation applicable, regardless of the type of exhibit or topic chosen.

Presentation consists of the clarity and overall aesthetic balance or appearance of your exhibit in the frames. Presentation is but one factor considered by the judges in assessing an exhibit's medal level. I will address the others – plan, treatment, knowledge, research, condition and rarity – in future articles.

Presentation is not supposed to count for much in assessing the final medal level. Although presentation is given greater weight in youth exhibits, it is only supposed to represent 20% of the adult medal level in Wisconsin Federation of Stamp Club shows such as Wiscopex. On the national level, presentation is supposed to account for a mere 5% of the final award. Still, if an exhibit is unattractive, neither the judges nor the public will want to spend much time trying to discover whatever positive attributes it may have, and that could have a significant impact on the award.

On the other hand, these should be the easiest points to earn. Nearly everyone has a computer today, and word processing programs make putting together a neat, attractive exhibit a cinch. There is little excuse for a sloppy exhibit that looks like it was lettered and mounted by a three-year-old with Elmer's glue, unless, of course, the exhibitor is a three-year-old. (But even then, glue should come nowhere

near the exhibit or your philatelic material).

No matter what category it falls within, a philatelic exhibit physically is made up of three parts: the philatelic material (stamps, covers and other items), the writeup or explanation of the material and the stuff that holds it all together the paper, mounts and sleeves).

Presentation in regards to philatelic material concerns how it is mounted on the page, not the appearance of the item itself. Evaluation of the intrinsic appearance of the material falls within a different criteria. Thus, concerns about how well centered a stamp may be, how blurred the cancel or how ratty a cover is are issues for consideration under the condition criteria rather than presentation.

Under presentation, judges are to consider such things as whether items are mounted straight, and whether the page (and the exhibit as a whole) has an attractive balance between philatelic material, writeup and "white space."

The writeup should be the minimum necessary to explain what the items show, to move the story along and to demonstrate the exhibitor's own research and philatelic knowledge. This is an exhibit, not an academic treatise. The emphasis must be on the philatelic material.

If you find that your writeup consistently consumes more space than your material, there is too much writeup. Proper sentences are not necessary, and most adjectives should be avoided. As Sgt. Joe Friday used to say on *Dragnet*, "just the facts."

Although it is the writeup and philatelic material that tells an exhibit's story, do not feel the need to cover every square inch of the

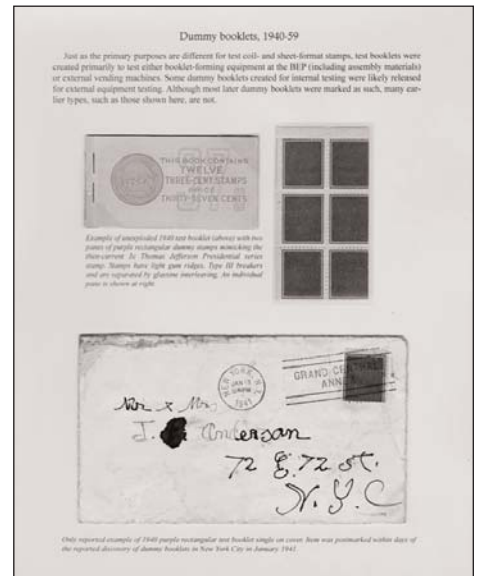


Exhibit pages should feature a balance between items and writeup, with not too much of either.

exhibit page. White space is necessary to provide your material some breathing room. While exhibitors debate European vs. American styles of exhibiting, with European exhibitors tending to fill much more of the page, too much material just creates an unattractive, cluttered look that distracts from your material and story line.

At the same time, too much white space is no good either. Unless it is of extreme importance, mounting a single small-size cover – or worse, a single stamp – on a page rarely is justified. Regular No. 6 covers, such as modern first-day covers, generally can be mounted two to a page with writeup, although smaller covers sometimes can fit three to a page with no overlap.

If only part of a cover is important to your story, covers or other material can be overlapped or even "windowed," where the exhibit page is slit and the cover inserted so that only part of the cover shows, with the remainder behind the page. This technique often is used when only the stamp and cancel or the meter strip are necessary to the exhibit. It also works where the rest of the cover is either so ugly or clearly philatelic in origin that the exhibitor would lose points by showing the whole thing. In either event, do not just cut the important parts off of the cover!

Including some overlap, windowing, tripling up on a page, or the occasional No. 10 cover mounted diagonally helps avoid the "railroad track" appearance of multiple pages, each with two covers mounted one directly above the other. Although some old-time judges object to diagonal mounting of larger covers to fit onto a 8½- by 11-inch page, it is fully acceptable by modern standards, and much preferable to mounting them vertically.

Next month, more on presentation.



APRIL 18, 2010
Celebrating
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on stamps

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Sunday, April 18

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Crowne Plaza Hotel - Madison, WI

4402 E. Washington Ave. (across from East Towne Mall)

- **Judged Philatelic Exhibits**
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- **15 Dealers**
- **Two 30-min. Workshops**
1 p.m. - Collecting Wisc.-Related Stamps
2 p.m. - Wisc. Postal History for Beginners
- **Free Stamp Collection Appraisals**
- **Door Prizes**

- **Beginners Table for Youth and Adults**
instructions on the basics of stamp collecting
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04.10

Catalog and real values don't necessarily match

Wayne L. Youngblood

A stamp catalog serves many functions to dealers and collectors. Arguably, the most important of these is as an identifier, showing stamp designs and characteristics, watermarks, perforation measurements and other important features. Stamp catalogs also contain a great deal of other important collecting information such as release dates of stamps, some errors and varieties for various issues, territorial and statehood dates, postal rates and more. But these useful bits are not why most collectors and dealers immediately reach for a catalog.

Stamp catalogs also contain values.

Catalog values, easily the most controversial function of a catalog, are highly important. However, they are intended only as a broad general guide, based on historical performance and not as an indisputable voice from above.

Unlike precious metals, stamps have no real or inherent value. Their value is determined solely through the laws of supply and demand, condition and desirability to collectors. As such, any stamp's value can rise or fall over time, without the added factors of condition, centering or a host of others.

Because there are so many factors to be taken into consideration in the valuation of a stamp, today's stamp catalog should be viewed as the "red book" for pricing purposes, and collectors should be aware that catalog value does not dictate a stamp's ultimate worth. In fact, the 20c minimum value used by Scott does not mean any of those stamps is actually worth 20c. It simply gives a nominal value that helps to pay for someone's time to price them.

Regardless of what any catalog says, a superior stamp will always bring a superior price (sometimes many multiples of catalog), a substandard stamp will always bring a low price (usually a small percentage of catalog) and most lower- to mid-range stamps are highly negotiable in their actual value.

Early stamp catalogs were never intended for reference. They were simply dealers' price lists that took on significance through collector use.

Some catalogs, such as Brookman, still serve that function. With this in mind, you can safely assume that values given in most catalogs are closer to the retail asking price than an actual estimate of what a collector could expect to receive for his or her stamps if selling them to a dealer or another collector.

When a collector decides to sell a collection, he or she is often disappointed by the net value of his or her holdings. This is because there is a large disparity between what a collector has learned from catalog values and what a dealer can afford to pay – particularly if most of the stamps contained in the collection are relatively common and may sit idle in a dealer's stock for months or even years.

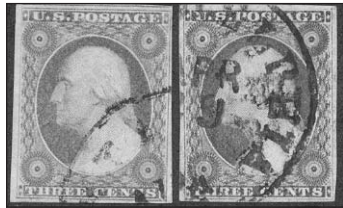


Figure 1. Both of these used copies of Scott 11 are graded with VF centering. Only the stamp at left would sell close to catalog value.

When collections or large lots of stamps are sold at auction, the net price is almost always considerably much lower than catalog value. This is because a collection must be "mined" by the purchaser (dealer or collector) to yield the greatest value.

There are many factors involved in determining the true value of a stamp. First and foremost to be considered is condition and centering.

Depending on what catalog you use, stamps are valued in different grades. For many years the Scott catalog valued stamps in the grade of F-VF, meaning a stamp was reasonably well-centered within normal-sized margins but not perfect. A few years ago Scott chose to reassign values to stamps in the grade of VF. While this move appeared to make the value of stamps increase it did not. An F-VF stamp with a retail valuation of \$10 was still worth about \$10 when the catalog value for a VF stamp went to \$15.



Figure 2. These two copies of No. 11, graded F-VF and F, respectively, would likely sell for more than their higher-graded counterpart at right in Figure 1. They simply look nicer.

Figure 1 shows two VF examples of U.S. Scott 11. The imperforate 3c 1851 is notorious for having very small margins, so finding a well-centered example with four full frame lines constitutes VF grading. Although both stamps are relatively well-centered examples with four full frame lines, only the left stamp would likely command close to its current \$15 catalog value. Why? Which stamp would you rather own? The relatively light and unobtrusive cancel on the stamp at left makes it far more desirable than the heavily canceled stamp at right (which would probably sell for about \$5).

The two stamps shown in Figure 2 feature F-VF and Fine centering, respectively. Although neither one would net the full catalog value, both are reasonably lightly canceled and are

more visually appealing than the higher-graded stamp shown at right in Figure 1. The retail price of these two items would probably be in the neighborhood of \$5 and \$4, respectively.

Keep in mind, though, that a dealer's buying price would be considerably lower. Because the 3c 1851 is still a relatively common stamp despite its age, large quantities of them are still sold wholesale at prices ranging from \$2-\$4 each for F-VF and better copies. Stamps with low catalog values often aren't even factored into the value of a collection when a dealer is buying. This does not mean that those stamps are worthless, but it does mean that a dealer's time is valuable and is a factor in determining a price.

But grade and condition aren't the only factors in determining value. Even damaged stamps with significant plate varieties, fancy cancels, early uses, scarce shades or other desirable factors (either individual or combined) can enhance the value of a stamp greatly, sometimes multiplying the value of an item by multiples.

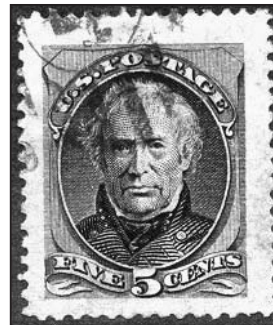


Figure 3. Catalog value has absolutely no bearing on the value of this stamp, which is freakishly large and would sell for many multiples above its \$25 valuation.

For example, the stamp shown in Figure 3, a used copy of the 5c Zachary Taylor Bank Note issue of 1879 is worthwhile as an individual item, and catalog value has no bearing on it whatsoever. Its current catalog value is \$25.

Due to the massive size of the margins and nearly XF centering, this particular stamp could retail for anywhere between \$75 and \$200 – or more. This is simply because it is so unusual to find a stamp this large and so well centered. Even a similar stamp with a minimal 20c catalog value would be worth anywhere from \$10-\$50, and would almost

assure a dealer of a sale at that price.

The point is that catalogs can only hope to serve as a very general guide to the valuation of stamps, based on their past performance.

The concern that catalog values are overly inflated is often voiced, but even if catalog editors tried to follow market conditions as closely as possible, catalog values would probably still be higher than dealer retail prices. Because of the competitive nature of our hobby's business side, it sounds good for dealers to be able to offer quality stamps at some percentage under catalog value.

In addition, because the neighborhood stamp store has all but disappeared, stamp dealers are competing with other dealers across the nation and all over the world (via internet) for the same customers.

Therefore, with the exception of scarce or superior material, discount after discount from catalog value is seen, making the present-day stamp market much more of a true supply and demand market.

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In addition to our award winning Public Auction catalogues, we offer interested collectors several other stamp buying opportunities on a regular basis.

We would like to introduce you to our *Eastern Mail Sales*—a listing of several thousand accurately described lots. These lots cover the whole range of philatelic collecting interests, from single stamps to complete collections with everything in between.

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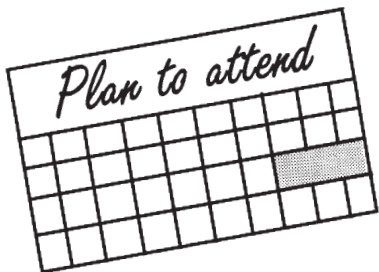
Attention Stamp Club Presidents:

Would your club benefit from additional membership?

Would your club be able to offer more engaging programmes if your Treasurer's Report was further in the Black?

Eastern Auctions is starting a new incentive program to help Local Stamp Clubs increase membership as well as improve their balance sheets.

Please contact Bill.Burden@easternauctions.com for further information.



Show Calendar and Registry

List your show, bourse, auction or other event here!
 Calendar listings are free for one WFSC member-club event per year. Classified advertising rates apply for all non-members and other events appearing in this section.

2010 WFSC show schedule*

*Some dates and details may be subject to change, and there will likely be additional listings.

April 10, 2010

Wiscopex '10
 (Annual Convention and Exhibition of the Wisconsin Federation of Stamp Clubs)
 Hosted by the Oshkosh Philatelic Society
 Christian Schools, 3450 Vinland Rd.,
 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Contact: Al Marcus (920) 725-0798,
 allan.marym@hotmail.com

April 18, 2010

Madison - Danepex '10
Badger Stamp Club
 Crowne Plaza Hotel, 4402 E. Washington
 Ave. (across from East Towne Mall)
 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Contact: Bob Voss, P.O. Box 35,
 McFarland, WI 53558 - 608-838-1033,
 lestamps@charter.net

April 24, 2010

Appleton - Outapex '10
Outagamie Philatelic Society
 VFW Post, 501 N. Richmond St.
 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Contact: Al Marcus, 920-725-0798,
 allan.marym@hotmail.com

May 8, 2010

Sheboygan Falls - Sheboygan Stamp and Coin Show, Sheboygan Stamp Club
 Municipal Building, 375 Buffalo St.
Contact: Barbara Stohl, P.O. Box 907,
 Sheboygan, WI 53082, 920-458-4883

June 19, 2010

Rhineland
29th Annual Show and Bourse, Northwoods Stamp and Coin Club
 James Williams Middle School, 915
 Acacia Ln., 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Contact: Larry Marten, 3295 Hancock
 Lake Rd., Harshaw, WI 54529
 715-282-5636, lfmarten@yahoo.com
 or Bill Julian 715-277-2692

June 26-27, 2010

West Allis - Tri-Pex Stamp Fair
ATA Chapter 5, North Shore Phil. Soc., and Waukesha County Phil. Soc.
 St. Aloysius Gonzaga Hall
 1435 So. 92nd St.
Contact: Robert Henak, NSPS, P.O. Box
 170832, Milwaukee, WI 53217 - 414-
 351-1519, henak8010@sbcglobal.net,
www.MilwaukeePhilatelic.org

Other major non-WFSC shows near Wisconsin (below, right):

May 1-2, 2010

West Allis, Wis. - Maypex '10
 St. Aloysius Gonzaga Hall
 1435 So. 92nd St.

May 28-30, 2010

Arlington Heights, Ill. - Compex '10
Chicago Area Philatelic Societies,
 Forest View Educational Center
 2121 So. Goebbert Rd.

July 16-18, 2010

Crystal, Minn. - Minnesota Stamp Expo
Maplewood Stamp Club, Twin City Phil. Soc., Lake Minnetonka Stamp Club, Minn. Stamp Dealers Assoc.
 Crystal Community Center 4800 N. Douglas Dr. North

We're all collectors...
 Please use stamps whenever possible on your mail!

An interesting essay

The item shown below turned up recently (as an original photo) in an online auction. It is a photograph of an essay of a watercolor design for a French stamp honoring the sesquicentennial of the U.S. Constitution in 1937. The design depicts Liberty and Marianne shaking hands in friendship. Have *ATFP* readers seen the original item?



U.S. "Face" lots!!

I'm cleaning out the stamp room again (still)!

While they last:

\$25 (face), \$50 (95%), \$100 (90%), \$250 (85%), more, postpaid

Wayne Youngblood
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