

Notes From Our Traveling Philatelist

by Stu Hanlein

Again my wife and I have been traveling back up north to Maryland to visit with our son and daughter-in-law. And I'm off to the stamp shows!

With my trusty copy of Linn's, I searched for stamp shows within an hour's drive or so from my home base, Germantown, Maryland. My first trip was to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to attend Gettypex 04 sponsored by the Blue and Gray Stamp Club of Gettysburg. The show was held in the meeting room of the local fire department, located right in the heart of this historic city - a beautiful new, spacious facility. I was warmly greeted by a very pleasant group of collectors. They were really geared up for encouraging kids to participate as they had tables of free stamps and numerous giveaways for the kids. I told them about our (KPS) efforts and they were interested in our (KPS) string-pull. Lucky me, I won the first door prize and picked up a batch of United Nations stamps all on cover. I spent quite a while at the USPS branch office they had at the show where I found stamps dating back about 20 years. The USPS even had a Lewis and Clark uncut sheet but someone beat me to that. In all there were 13 dealers, most of whom were locals and were very reasonable with pricing. I, of course, chased after my precancels without much success until I chatted with a dealer who had bought a recent collection. He didn't bring the collection to this show but luckily he was attending a show the next day that I had planned to attend as well.

So, on Sunday, October 31, I attended the Suburban Maryland Stamp and Cover Show held in Rockville, Maryland, which was 15 minutes from my Germantown base. I had attended this show before when I last visited the area and was somewhat disappointed because most of the dealers were into covers. However, this time I did manage to pick up the precancel collection from the dealer I had met the day before, thus it was a good day! The collection was a Bureau Album but the collector obviously didn't know the difference as it contained quite a few locals as well. There was nothing rare but the material was good. I also met stamp dealer James Reeves. He promotes his own show in Baltimore, Maryland, and also advertises heavily in Linn's. I have bought supplies from him in the past - a fine gentleman, I might add.

My third show was the Quarterly Coin and Stamp Show held at the Vienna Community Center in Vienna, Virginia, close by the area where I used to work when I lived in the DC-Metro area. Here is where my luck ran out. The coin dealers had a huge room with about 50 dealers while the stamp dealers, totaling 15, were wedged into a very small room. I felt sorry for these gentlemen because the collectors couldn't even sit down to look at the stamps without being bounced around by the other collectors. This is how not to do business. I doubt that very many of the dealers were happy with this setup. I did manage to pick up a few foreign collections before I crushed and headed home.

One again, I recommend that you take a look at your stamp publications (Linn's, The American Philatelist, Global Stamp News, etc.) before you head out of town. There are a lot of good shows to visit and some new material to be found. Good luck finding that "needle in a haystack"!