

# *The Masonic Philatelist*

PUBLISHED BY THE MASONIC STAMP CLUB OF NEW YORK



Vol. VII No. 8 January 1951



## *• Meetings •*

### JANUARY 26

For the first meeting of the new year we will have the pleasure of listening to a story of a trip to the London Stamp Show last summer, by Brother Herman Herst, Jr. Pat, as he is known in stamp circles, is a good story-teller, and with the aid of slides, will tell of his trip to London, Europe, and North Africa. We've heard Pat on several occasions and he puts on a good show. It is our suggestion that you come down early, meet your friends, and spend a very pleasant evening. Start the New Year right.



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### February 2

This is our annual Masonic Philately Night. This is a fine opportunity for you to bring a friend and introduce him to the joys of collecting stamps with a Masonic flavor. You are also requested to bring something to show. Let the other fellow see what you are doing in this field.

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The story of "An Early Masonic Cover", by Brother William C. Michaels, on pages 6 and 7, was originally printed in STAMPS for November 14, 1942.

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### CONGRATULATIONS

to Brother Arthur C. Zimmermann, Who was installed as Master of Hebron Lodge No. 813, F. & A.M. on January 11th. Brothers John Nicklin, Harry Konwiser and Sam Brooks represented the Masonic Stamp Club. Good Luck and God speed, Arthur.

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(\*) indicates deceased

## THE MASONIC PHILATELIST

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### EDITOR

Sam Brooks, 985 Anderson Ave.,  
New York 52, N. Y.

## GEOGRAPHICALLY SPEAKING our Members reside in

New York City 61  
Brooklyn 20  
Long Island 28  
New York State including  
Westchester 20  
New Jersey 28

California 6  
Connecticut 4  
Florida 3  
Illinois 5  
Indiana 3  
Maryland 5  
Massachusetts 9  
Michigan 1  
Missouri 3  
Nebraska 2  
Nevada 1  
Ohio 11  
Oregon 2  
Pennsylvania 12  
Rhode Island 1  
Vermont 1  
Washington, D.C. 3  
Washington 1  
Wisconsin 4

Canada 2  
Newfoundland 1  
Great Britain 1  
Curacao, N.W.I. 1

HMK reports that only 31  
of this group have NOT  
paid their dues. Let's  
make it unanimous. PAY  
YOUR DUES TODAY!!!

### *Poor Richard Said:*

**VALUE OF SELF HELP:** The surest way to obtain aid from others is vigorously to help ourselves. People fear to assist the negligent, the indolent and the careless lest the aid they afford should be lost.

A REWARDING HOBBY that one of our members calls to our attention is described here with the hope that some of our other Brothers may find it interesting.

Brother Herman Herst, Jr., of Shrub Oak, N.Y. occasionally comes upon old covers, cornercards, or letters with Masonic significance, many of them from small towns, and usually dated some time in the last century. While they are of no particular philatelic value, Brother Herst has been getting in touch with Lodges in the towns in question, inquiring whether they would be interested in them for their archives. Recently, Brother Herst happened upon a very ordinary folded letter bearing a 3¢ 1851, and addressed to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana. The letter contained a request from a group of the Craft residing in Waterproof, La. for a Dispensation to form a Lodge in their Town.

A letter addressed to the Masonic Lodge in Waterproof, found its way to Saint Joseph, La., and a prompt reply from the Secretary of the Lodge gave the interesting history that the Waterproof Lodge was Instituted but gave up its Charter late in the 19th century. Subsequently, another Lodge was organized in Saint Joseph, and the Waterproof members affiliated with it.

As a result, the Saint Joseph Lodge, which could only trace its history back to the late 19th century now has in its possession a cover bearing a postage stamp, that has added four decades to its recorded history. Needless to say the Lodge thanked Brother Herst for his thoughtfulness.

Brother Herst suggests that any of our Brothers coming upon philatelic items that could properly be donated to Lodges, should consider the possibility of making such donation, in the name of the Masonic Stamp Club. Certainly by so doing we will be fulfilling our own obligations, and at the same time bring to members of the Craft the realization that stamp collectors, as collectors and as Masons are ready and willing to help their Brothers in our great Fraternity.

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Brother John Mirt of Chicago, sends greetings to all of us. "Some day I hope that my trip to New York will be at a time when the Club meets. Maybe I'll take the trip next July with the Shrine fellows," writes John.

That's a good thought for a lot of you out-of-towners. The Welcome Mat is always out.

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Brother I.O. Hammonds of Youngstown, Ohio, writes that he won a First Prize at Salem recently with the aid of John Mirt's articles in the Masonic Philatelist. Brother Hammonds wants information on foreign Masonic stamps. Can you help?

# MASONRY ON POSTAGE STAMPS

By John A. Mirt, M.P.S., Chicago, Illinois



OR THE Masonic student interested in historic research is recommended the postage stamp. It is a never-ending field for study; a field the surface of which has barely been scratched.

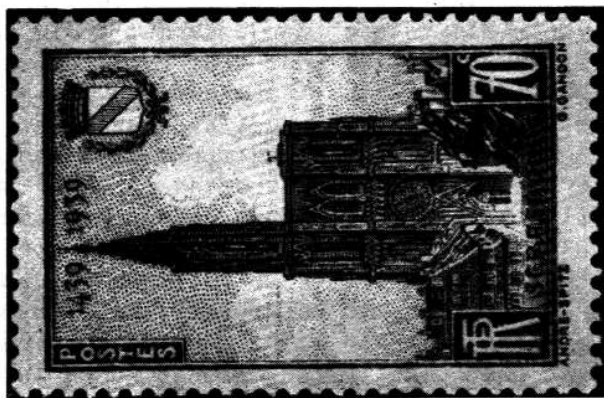
To the Masonic philatelist, a postage stamp is something *more* than a thing of intrinsic value. He regards it for what it usually is—a memorial. But more than that, a stamp arouses curiosity and tests his ability.

Does the stamp tell a Masonic story? That is the question in his mind. Therefore, every postage stamp which passes through his hands presents a challenge. Since one thousand or more varieties are issued by the nations of the world every year, he never is at a loss for study material.

Sometimes the answer is found in the most unusual places. And when it is found, the student frequently uncovers the beauties of Freemasonry's historic background, or a story of Masonic principles at work. A case in point is a 70-centimes postage stamp issued by the French government in

1939. On it is pictured the magnificent Gothic Cathedral in Strasbourg, France, which was constructed in the 13th century with some additions in succeeding centuries. It is noted for its elaborate tracery, rich sculpture and beautiful windows.

Erected before Speculative Masonry was established, the question arose: Did the Cathedral have anything to do with Operative Masonry? I found



this answer, of all places, in the

"Masonic Centennial History of the Grand Lodge of Ohio," published in 1876. And that publication went back nearly a century to another source: "Essay on the Cathedral of Strasbourg," written by the French Abbé Granddier, in 1782. In his essay the French Abbé gave an account of Operative Masonry which bears repeating. His story goes:

"The Masons of those fabrics and their pupils—spread over the whole of Germany—to distinguish themselves from the common workmen, formed themselves into the Fraternity of Masons, to which they gave the German name '*Huetten*,' which signifies lodges; but they all agreed to recognize the authority of the original one at Strasbourg, which was named '*Haupt-Huetten*,' or Grand Lodge.

"The different Masters of the individual lodges assembled at Ratisbon, where they drew up on the 25th of April, 1459, the Act of Fraternity, which established the chief of the Cathedral of Strasbourg and his successors as sole and perpetual Grand Masters of the Fraternity of Freemasons of Germany. In 1498, Emperor Maximilian confirmed their privileges in a diploma which was successively renewed by Charles V, Ferdinand, and successors.

"Their lodge as tribunal judged without appeal all cases brought before it, according to the rules and statutes of the Fraternity, which was renewed and printed in 1563. The members of the Society had no communication with other Masons, who merely knew the use of the trowel and mortar. They adopted for characteristic marks all that belonged to the profession, which they regarded as an art far superior to that of the simple mason.

"The square, level and compasses became their attributes. Resolved to form a body distinct from the common herd of workmen, they invented for use among themselves rallying words and tokens of recognition, and other distinguishing signs. This, they called the sign of words—*das wortzeichen, le salut, der gruss*. The Apprentices, Companions, and Masters were received with ceremonies conducted in secret. They took for their motto, 'Liberty.' They were a Fraternity and practiced a secret art or technology.

"The Freemasons carried the architecture of their country throughout the whole of Europe. They indentured their apprentices; initiated only those who were to form members of their body. They bound them to secrecy by imposing oaths. They carefully concealed, and even destroyed, documents which might disclose their knowledge. They formed a secret language that they might describe their art to each other without uninitiated persons understanding them; and they formed a code of secret signs that they might recognize each other as Masons, though personally unknown to each other, and keep strangers from getting into fellowship with them.

"They also imposed conditions on the parishes in which they labored. Thus a covenant was entered into between a lodge of Freemasons and the church wardens of Parish Suffolk, in the reign of Henry VI, that each Mason be furnished with a pair of leather gloves and a white apron, and that a lodge, properly tiled, should be built for their meetings at the expense of the parish."

(Original twice this length.)

AN EARLY  
CALIFORNIA  
MASONIC  
COVER



Photograph of the Masonic cover which is the subject of the accompanying article by Mr. Michaels.

By WILLIAM C. MICHAELS

EARLY California covers have long been popular with nearly all collectors of United States stamps. Some of them are not particularly rare, but many, especially those with express company markings, are very popular and are among the most desirable United States cover items, and frequently bring fancy prices at auctions. Masonic covers are not in as great demand as early California items, but there are a large and growing number of collectors who take anything in the Masonic line that comes along. When a collector speaks of a Masonic cover, he not only refers to covers with Square and Compass, Trowel, Double Triangle or other Masonic emblem cancellations, but also to those with printed Grand Lodge or local lodge return cards or with printed local or Grand Lodge addresses.

Not so very long ago I had the good fortune to acquire an early California item that was also a "Masonic." Such combinations are unusual. Indeed, I cannot recall ever having seen such a combination offered in any cover sale. I thought it would be of interest not only to

collectors who are Masons, but also to collectors of Masonic and early California covers. A photograph of the item appears with this article.

The romance that surrounds the discovery of gold in California and the rush of the Argonauts to the "gold country" is one of the prime reasons why the early California items are so much in demand. Recently, I decided to seek some information about the Ionic Lodge at Iowa Hill, the addressee on the above cover, and so I wrote to the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge at San Francisco for such information as his records might disclose.

In due course I received a letter from George E. Wilson, Past Grand Master of California, and the Present Grand Secretary. He had very graciously gone into the archives, and gave me the interesting bit of history hereafter set out. The reader will note from the photograph the initials "U. D." after the word Lodge. Any Mason will understand that those initials stand for the words "Under Dispensation." The reader will note that Iowa Hill was in Placer County, thus named from the large number of gold bearing streams



which existed so abundantly in that area.

It was in the North Mother Lode Country and the Argonauts from nearly every eastern state flocked there to seek their fortunes in the gold sands. Frequently, men from the same states or localities back east like "birds of a feather," flocked together and they gave to their camps or settlements the names of their respective home states. There was in Placer County a Wisconsin Hill, a Michigan Bluff, an Iowa Hill and other settlements and camps, now extinct, with similar "back east" names.

Auburn is the county seat of Placer County. I obtained the cover from a part time stamp dealer residing in Auburn. He turned it up while browsing around the old mining camps in his and adjacent counties. A look at the map will show that Grass Valley, Downieville, Rough and Ready and other places, where many interesting early California covers originated, are in Sierra or Nevada Counties lying just north of Placer County. All of these camps were about fifty or sixty miles northeast of Sacramento.

Among the gold seekers from the East were many Masons and they very early got together and after "lawful information or strict examination" formed a state Grand Lodge. Groups of proved Masons in this or that locality desiring to establish a local lodge applied to the Grand Lodge for a charter, but charters are not granted to local groups right off the reel. Such groups are granted by the Grand Master what is known as a Dispensation and the local lodge, having selected a name, thenceforth operates "Under Dispensation" until a charter is duly granted. As a Mason, I was interested in finding out what I could about this Ionic Lodge formed by the Argonauts and Grand Secretary Wilson sent me the fol-

lowing brief history:

#### "IONIC LODGE No. 121

"Dispensation was issued by Grand Master N. Greene Curtis, October 19, 1857, to brethren at Iowa Hill, Placer County, who had been members of Wisconsin Hill Lodge No. 74, which surrendered its charter August 20, 1857, and of Iowa Hill Lodge No. 63, then contemplating a surrender of its charter (it was surrendered October 20, 1857), the new Lodge to be known as Ionic Lodge, at Iowa Hill. Charter was granted May 13, 1858 and the lodge was given the number 121. Among the charter members were such well known Masons as Jacob Hart Niff, who was the first Secretary; John C. Coleman, and Ezra H. Van Decar, the first Master, who later was Grand High Priest of Royal Arch Masons of California. The Lodge started with twenty-five members, and was at its peak in 1862 with forty-eight members. For many years the membership hovered around thirty, and finally, in October, 1905, Grand Lodge received a resolution from the Lodge, stating that the membership had been so reduced that it was deemed advisable to surrender the charter; at the next annual communication, October, 1906, Ionic Lodge was declared extinct."

It will be observed that the cover was mailed November 23, 1857 only a little over a month after Dispensation was granted. The adhesive three-cent imperforate stamp is in the typical deep claret shade of the March-April 1857 printings. Perforating had begun in a limited way a month or more prior to the printing and issuance of this stamp. The issuance of imperforate three-cent stamps persisted, in decreasing volume, until perhaps January, 1858.

A letter from Mable E. DeMond, Postmistress at Iowa Hill, informed me that while Iowa Hill in the old days was quite a large settlement, at the present time its population is between eighty-five and one hundred. She says "there is still some mining but on a very small scale." The Post Office is in Mrs. DeMond's store where she "sells groceries, mining supplies and keeps a bar."

## THE BRITISH PEACE STAMPS AGAIN.

One of the very interesting features of the WESTERN STAMP COLLECTOR, is a column written by MR.W.DENNIS WAY of London. In the January 6th issue, a reader from Lincoln, Nebraska, asks to be put in touch with collectors in England who are interested in Masonic Philately. Mr. Way knows of no Freemasons who collect in that manner. Mr. Way then very emphatically ridicules the idea that the "Peace" stamps were in any way Masonic.

The London gentleman has apparently missed the point. We doubt if anyone connected with the Craft claimed for these stamps any sort of Masonic origin. We do maintain, however, that emblems shown on these stamps, whether placed there with that thought in mind or not, are definitely Masonic in character, and any collection of Masonic interest should include this set.

We are not sufficiently versed in horticulture to determine whether the foliage on the stamps are of the Acacia or the Clive family. We do state there can be no question about the trowel with a setting maul on the handle and the square and compasses, being of Masonic significance.

We have always maintained that a Masonic collection should contain any stamp, of any country, that shows a Masonic symbol. As long as you know the purpose of that symbol, whether in the design, cancellation, or even the corner card place it in your collection. Collect what you think is Masonic and let the other fellow collect what he wants.

We might add for the benefit of Mr. Way, and others interested, that there are large groups in England, Australia, and other countries, as well as in the U.S.A. that are interested in Masonic Philately, as witness the several Masonic stamp clubs in this country, The Masonic Philatelic Society of Victoria, Australia, and The Philatelic Lodge, F.&A.M. of Victoria, Australia.

---Sam Brooks

