

The Watermark

Canada's Online Masonic Philatelic Newsletter.



Not An April Fools Joke!

We have arrived to the month of April with its first day being known for tomfoolery and practical jokes that many of us may be subjected to. Interestingly though the tradition of April fools has no official start date or confirmed origin. The most popular explanation is that the beginning of this tradition was in France in 1582, where prior to that, the New Year was celebrated for eight days, beginning on March 25. The celebration culminated on April 1. When the Gregorian calendar was introduced under the reign of Charles IX, and New Year's Day was moved to January 1, those that refused to submit to the new date were dubbed April fools. In some countries such as Canada, New Zealand, the UK, Australia, Cyprus, and South Africa, the jokes only last until noon, whereas in many other countries such as the U.S. Brazil, Japan, Russia and several other countries such as the U.S. Brazil, Japan, Russia and many other European countries the joking continues all day. By now you are probably wondering what this has to do with Freemasonry or stamp collecting? Freemasonry has always been under attack by the misinformed and the despots but we're now facing a new threat that in many ways is far more damaging. That threat is internal. In many communities the rank and file are not happy with the status quo and in our quick fix world we are seeing the emergence of many "unrecognized" or "spurious" Grand Lodges. This should not be that big a deal, but sadly many of them do not espouse the values and ethics of traditional recognized" Freemasonry. page 6

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"Criticism is something we can avoid easily by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing"

Aristotle 384 BC-322 BC



Anti- Mason of the Month

Catherine the Great of Russia

Born *Sophie Friederike Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst-Dornburg*, a minor Prussian Princess she became the longest-ruling and most renowned female ruler in Russian history. By all accounts she was a remarkable woman who modernized Russia in many ways and even though she was not Russian, she embraced and absorbed so much of the country's culture, history and traditions, she became the personification of Russia itself.

She came to power following a *coup d'état* and the assassination of her husband Tsar Peter III in 1762 after a reign of only six months. Her role in the assassination was never proven but it was convenient. Born on the 21st April 1729 she was raised a devout Lutheran but embraced the Russian Orthodox Church and changed her name to Ekaterina Aleksevna prior to her engagement to Grand Duke Peter. After her marriage in 1745 the sixteen-year-old future monarch settled into life in the palace of Oranienbaum. The marriage was not a happy one. Her husband took a mistress and she had numerous liaisons herself. Throughout her long reign she continued to have many lovers whom she elevated in status and kept them around until she grew tired of them. Even though she was tired of them she always

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Canadian Masonic Stamp of the Month

Richard Bedford Bennett, 1st Viscount Bennett



1955, Scott # 357

R. B. Bennett (1870-1947) had the dubious honour of serving as Canada's 11th Prime Minister from 1930 -1935 during the worst years of the Great Depression. He was born and raised in rural New Brunswick on the shores of the Bay of Fundy at Hopewell Cape (the site of the world famous Hopewell Rocks) His once prosperous shipbuilding family were reduced to near poverty after the collapse of the wooden ship era. His lifelong habit of thrift was impressed upon him by his mother's staunch Protestant faith and principles of "work as hard as you can, earn all you can, save all you can, and then give all you can. He graduated from Dalhousie University in Halifax in 1893 with a law degree and set up practice in Chatham New Brunswick. He eventually moved to Calgary Alberta and made his fortune. He served in politics in the Territorial, Provincial and eventually the Federal governments. After five difficult years as Prime Minister his Conservative Party was decimated in 1935 and the Conservatives would not form a majority government again until 1958! He retired to England in 1939 and in 1941 he became the first and only Canadian Prime Minister to be elevated to peerage. He died in 1947 and is the only Canadian Prime Minister not buried in this country. He was a member Mirimichi Lodge



Stuck on Seals

Another interesting category for Masonic Philatelists is collecting Masonic Seals and Labels issued by the fraternity.

So it is not surprising organizations around the world including Freemasonry began producing their own seals as a way of promoting their cause and bring attention to

public issues and raising funds for their activities.

Seals are also called “labels” and “Poster Stamps” in other

countries but regardless of what they are called they have one thing in common; though they look like stamps, they have no postage value. In the world of philately they known as “Cinderella’s” which also includes telegraph stamps, railway stamps, revenues, fiscals, forgeries, bogus and phantom issues, registration labels, advertisement and exhibition labels. The British “Cinderella Stamp Club” www.cinderellastampclub.org.uk as the name suggests specializes in the study of Cinderella’s and have quite a bit of information on them but alas they have nothing I could find on Masonic Cinderella’s. A review of EBay will find a number of Masonic labels



In North America what we call seals have been fairly common for decades. The most notable in Canada have been Christmas and Easter Seals. Every year as a child I would anxiously await the release of the colourful Christmas seals and we would attach them to the back of our Christmas card envelopes. The Christmas seal campaign was and is a huge fundraiser for the Heart and Lung Society.

Einar Holbøll a Danish postal clerk originally conceived the Christmas seal in 1903 as a means

of raising money to combat tuberculosis in Denmark. Over four million were sold in the first year and within six years enough money had been

raised to build a sanatorium in Kolding Denmark. It didn’t take long for other countries around the world to follow Denmark’s lead and Christmas seals were being sold all over the world. Canada and the United States began selling them in 1908 and continue to sell them until this day with the proceeds going to the Canadian and the American Lung Associations. Even the Danish Nazi Party got in on the act and was selling their own Christmas seals between 1937-1943 but none of their funds were used for charitable causes other than their own.



from primarily the USA, Denmark and Italy but I think they prices that they are being advertized for is outrageous but each to their own. What collectors choose to collect (and spend) is their business. I for one think they make a nice addition to ones stamp collection.

Catherine II Continued

showed them generosity by pensioning them off with large estates, serfs and fortunes.

The sad irony of Catherine II was that her hatred of Freemasonry was based partly on her fear of revolutionary motives and her personal desire to live life more as a man than being forced into the traditional role of a woman. Wherever possible she presented herself in ways that were more masculine than feminine, and preferred dressing up in Men's clothes at any excuse, and riding astride a horse particularly when indulging in hunting and reviewing her troops. She enjoyed Masquerade Costume Balls and almost always



appeared dressed as a man.

To her

Freemasonry represented "One of the greatest aberrations to which the human race had succumbed." And she described it as, "a strange fad among males only" and scorned it as, "a mixture of religious ritual and childish games". Ritual and games that she as a woman was not permitted to partake. In addition Freemasonry to her, was dominated by the "do-nothing" Moscow Nobility who were a potential threat to her because of their wealth and

buying power, could be used to undermine the her privilege of absolute monarchy. She even wrote three crudely satirical comedies (The deluded" and "The Siberian Shaman) publicly ridiculing Freemasonry, its practices.

Catherine was an extremely able woman skilled in administration, law, the subtleties of politics and most importantly choosing her advisers many of who had been her lovers. But her advisers were more than willing to encourage her "manly proclivities" and took every opportunity to fill her head with distrust of the craft to cement their relationship with her. Catherine was not only fearful of the libertarian aspects of masonry; she feared any type of thought that went contrary to her will. As such she placed strict guidelines on what types of books could be published and any and all-religious books had to be approved by church authorities.

Her notorious secret police were very efficient at ferreting out those suspected of being Freemasons after she requested they "investigate the Craft" and happily provided her with the kind of information "she wanted to hear".

Her round up and persecution of prominent members of the Craft began with the prominent Russian publicist Novikov whose house was raided by the police and resulted in the seizure of 20 banned books numerous Masonic books and papers for which he received 15 years imprisonment. Other prominent masons such as Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi, Brigadier Ivan Turgenev, and Brigadier Ivan Lopukhin were arrested, interrogated



and banned from Moscow. Others received lengthy prison sentences as potential threats to the Russian Government.

Catherine was enraged when the secret police intercepted letters from Vasilii Bazhenov, a notable

Architect and leading Russian Freemason that referred to Masonic books, which had been sent to her son the Grand Duke Paul. This led to a heated argument between Catherine and her son. He firmly denied being a member of the craft but when he ascended to the throne four years later as Tsar Paul I, he wasted no time in freeing imprisoned Freemasons and reversed his mother's policies against the Craft.

Ironically the enlightened reforms Catherine the Great created for Russia were parallel to many of the principles of Freemasonry. Had she been less paranoid about conspiracies to overthrow her during her reign, which were likely caused by the fact that she was a foreigner and had secured her throne by deposing her husband, Catherine may not have persecuted Freemasonry the way she did and she might even have embraced the Craft the way other monarchs of the day did.

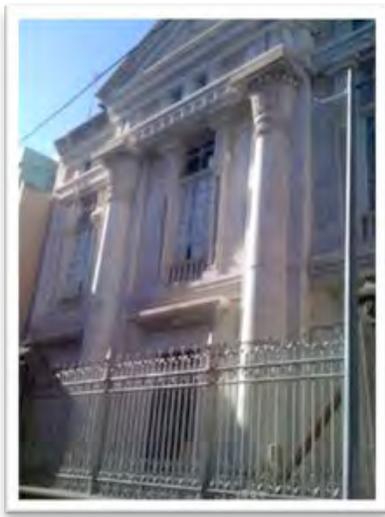
You've Got Mail!



In these days of email and Skype it seems that the only thing you get in the mailbox is bills and ad mail. So you can appreciate how

pleased I was the other day when I received a letter from a reader of the Watermark who stumbled across it on the Internet. Not only was it a real letter but also it had a personalized Masonic stamp on it that I had never seen before! Now you're getting excited too, I can feel it.

The letter was from Brother Rafael Raya Sanchez who lives on the Island of Tenerife the largest of the Canary Islands. The Spanish stamp depicts a Sphinx overlaid with a Square and Compass. In his letter to me which was in Spanish and had been run through a computerized translation program; (Programs like "Google Translation" are helpful but I have discovered that the literal translation of words into and other language often fails to provide the proper context of what is



they still re very helpful when you cannot speak or read a different language.) I was able to determine that he was a collector of Masonic stamp's, letters and postmarks, and was eager to make contact with others in this fascinating hobby. Brother Rafael explained that the sphinx is one of a pair that guards the front door of

the Masonic Lodge in Tenerife, Canary Islands. "Templo San Lucas" the Masonic Temple in Santa Cruz was built for Lodge Anaza in 1909. Under the reign of General Franco (see Watermark March 2011) the Temple was confiscated and used as the headquarters of the Falangist Party and later by the Guardia Civil.

This magnificent building is presently under renovation and will be turned into a museum



and local Freemasons hope that they will be allowed to use their building again. You can see photographs of this temple and learn more about Freemasonry on the Canary Islands by visiting <http://www.tenerifemasons.org/home.html>

So if you have something to share or just want to drop me a line please do so, I love to get real letters with real stamps on them!



1999, Scott #2621

Masonic Stamp of the Month

Philippines Masonic Charities

The Philippines' have issued several pure Masonic stamps over the years, the most recent being in 2011. This particular stamp is noteworthy because unlike nearly all other government issued Masonic stamps this one acknowledges the enormous amount of charity work that is done by Freemasons.

Editorial continued

Unfortunately many good men who simply want to become Freemasons are duped and then defrauded by these spurious organizations that had no legitimate right to be created in the first place because these organizations were not created under a charter from a legitimate Grand Lodge. In the United States the problem with bogus Grand Lodges is so big there are now more African American bogus grand lodges than there are legitimate Grand Lodges throughout the rest off the world! Check out the "Bogus Masonry Page" at <http://www.thephylaxis.org/bogus/history.php> to learn more about this issue. As Brother John B. Williams noted on his web page <http://www.thephylaxis.org/williams/4-letter.php> "*Legitimate Freemasons are part of an Order rooted in heritage and law*". There isn't room in this editorial to list all of the spurious groups claiming to be legitimate, but it is important that we recognize the fact that they exist and may exist in our jurisdictions. Not only will they dupe good men into joining their fraudulent groups they will also recruit men who otherwise would not adhere to the values Freemasons are expect to live by. In addition the behavior and activities of



some these groups can seriously undermine the credibility of legitimate

Freemasons. Activities such as gambling, excessive noise due to partying and drinking are creating problems for the legitimate Lodges in communities where they are located. The general public does not know the difference and any group calling itself masonic is deemed by the public to be Masonic! Remember the Italian "P2 Lodge" in 1980's and how to this day anti-Masonic opportunists claim that "Freemasons" were involved in one of the biggest bank scandals in history and even in the alleged murder of Pope John Paul I. Or more recently with the death of Michael Jackson who personal physician was "Grand Medical Director" of the spurious "United Most Worshipful Scottish Grand Lodge of Texas"! I am not saying that all unrecognized Grand Lodges practice



spurious behavior, because many of the men in these groups are very good men who take their masonry seriously. What I am saying is we need to acknowledge the existence of these spurious groups and find ways to educate the public about the differences and we need to find ways to encourage our unrecognized brethren who were duped and defrauded to find a welcoming home in our lodges. In addition legitimate Grand Lodges need to find ways to address the issues that drive men away and from over 300 years of bringing men together to form their own concept of Freemasonry. Most importantly jurisdictions that still have not recognized our Prince Hall brothers have to eliminate the underlying racism where it still exists and join the rest of the world in practicing true brotherly love. This issue my friends, is no April Fools joke!