

INTRODUCTION TO THE MP BACK ISSUES

Before embarking on a review of past issues of *The Masonic Philatelist*, it is important to realize that the Masonic Stamp Club of New York was not formed for the express purpose of studying stamps associated with the Masonic Order. Our founding brethren simply created a stamp club. The idea that Masonic-related stamps could be a topical subject was the furthest thing from their minds. In short, the Masonic Stamp Club of New York had little to do with “Masonic stamps” as we now know them. It was a MASONIC Stamp Club, as opposed to a MASONIC STAMP Club.

Nevertheless, some members had noticed that two very high profile people were depicted on stamps and that those people were known to have been Freemasons. These people were George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. This led to a review of all the American Presidents shown on stamps whereupon it was found that a number of them were also Freemasons.

The question of who else shown on stamps were Freemasons was a bit difficult to answer. Considerable research had to be done in Grand Lodge libraries and public libraries. Some brethren started doing such research and were able to add more Masonic-related stamps to the list.

During this time the Club simply carried on as a general stamp club—every aspect of stamp collecting was discussed and the many shows it held had absolutely no restrictions.

As time went on, researchers came across certain events or objects (artwork, buildings) shown on stamps that were directly connected to a famous Freemason, so stamps of this nature were added to the list of Masonic-related stamps. Also noticed was that some stamps showed symbolic items that could be connected to Freemasonry (Bibles, tools, instruments, etc) so again such stamps were added.

By far, the majority of Club discussions on stamps up to the end of 1949 were generic in nature. Discussions on postal history, however, mentioned postmasters who were Freemasons. Also Masonic cancellations were presented.

As interest in finding Masonic-related stamps increased, then more stamps were indeed found and presented in *The Masonic Philatelist*. The first two government issued Masonic stamps appeared in 1956. They were issued by Cuba. They show a Masonic Grand Lodge building and celebrate the Grand Orient of Cuba at Havana. The fact that the words “Grand Temple Masonic” are shown on the stamps sets them apart from a 1935 stamp issued by Honduras, which simply shows a Masonic building with no identification.

The big break, as it were, for finding Masonic-related stamps came in 1958 with the publication of William Denslow’s book, *10,000 Famous Freemasons*. Denslow simply wrote a book

about famous freemasons. He was not involved in philately. He showed names in alphabetical order with a brief biography, lodge information, and the subject’s Masonic history. How he was able to acquire so much information at that time is truly amazing.

With this work, Masonic stamp collectors could reverse the process for finding a Masonic-related stamp, and greatly decrease the time involved. Previously, they had to check for Masonic membership as it related to a stamp; now they had the Masonic information and could search for a stamp—still not easy, but much easier.

Denslow naturally included in his biographies the reason for the subject’s acclaim or notoriety (inventions, artwork, military, politics and so forth) so stamps that featured such were tied in with the Freemason listed. .

As a result of Denslow’s book, the number of Masonic-related stamps increased to the point where they became the focus of the Club. Thus the name of the Club essentially became The MASONIC STAMP Club. In other words, a club primarily devoted to Masonic-related stamps.

Denslow’s book essentially “fueled the fires” of Masonic philately for about 30 years (and still does to a degree). The next big break came with the advent of email and the Internet. Now people could share knowledge world-wide with ease and minimal cost, so many more Masonic-related stamps came to light.

In reviewing the back issues of *The Masonic Philatelist* you will clearly see how the Club has evolved. In providing the entries, we have shown what appears to be the most important entry in each edition. This is strictly an opinion. There are many other entries that may be more important to you.

When the scanning of a decade of our quarterly publications is completed, the scans will be linked to a red box showing the decade years. Clicking on this box takes you to the individual issues.

For the Record: In about 2000, the Club discontinued its policy of accepting memberships only from Freemasons. Any references to the old policy in the back issues are to be disregarded. There is no reason why anyone interested in stamps cannot undertake a Masonic topical collection and join with us in our research.

In 2014 we reverted back to featuring material in *The Masonic Philatelist* that is not Masonic-related. This was done to broaden our scope and perhaps attract new members to our Club.

The provision of a website, also in 2014, ensures that anyone who wishes to know about our remarkable Brethren who are depicted on, or connected with postage stamps, may do so at their leisure. We are extremely proud of our heritage and wish to share it with anyone who is interested.