



THE PHILLY PHILATELIST

Award-Winning Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Stamp & Collectors Club

Founded 1904

American Philatelic Society – Chapter 18

January 2025

www.GPSCC.org

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NEXT MEETING

January 21, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Community Rooms
GIANT Supermarket
315 N. York Rd., Willow Grove, PA

Dinner:

For those who would like to join us for dinner beforehand, we will meet at The W Tavern, about a block from GIANT, at 5:00 p.m. for cocktails followed by dinner at 5:30 p.m.

210 York Rd., Willow Grove, PA



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Paul F. Miller

Happy New Year – 2025!

Another new year has rolled around and is already underway. I hope all our members enjoy a year of health, happiness, and stamp collecting satisfaction.

Last year, I commented that participation in GPSCC was a key ingredient in keeping the club healthy, vibrant and enjoyable for all members. I was happy to see and experience wonderful levels of participation throughout 2024 from a wide range of our members.

For instance, a year ago we kicked off the year with a new name for the newsletter, *The Philly Philatelist*. The new name was the result of members providing choices and then voting on the winning name.

The success of that name, and the newsletter, continued throughout the year and was recognized again as part of the American Philatelic Society's

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(APS) [Star Route Awards](#) program. Just after the completion of our November 2024 meeting, the APS posted a YouTube video announcing the award winners. Not only did *The Philly Philatelist* win a Gold medal (for the second time in two years), but the GPSCC website also won a Large Vermeil medal, one step above the prior year's award level.

I am immensely proud of these awards because I know that participation from our members plays a large part in the success and recognition of these key attributes of the club.

Another example of participation in our club occurred when we had two of our members step in immediately to fill vacancies in our officer ranks. Two of our existing officers stepped down in 2024 to take a more relaxed approach to enjoying the club.

(Continued on next page)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

Letty Moon, our long-time Secretary, and **Phil Russell**, our equally long-time Vice President, both decided to let some other folks handle the reins for the club. We thank both Letty and Phil for their long service and participation in the club as they have done an excellent job over many years.

Although their help with officer duties will be missed, we are excited that **Robert Cohen** has already stepped into the Secretary role and **Mike Wilson** has agreed to take on the Vice President role. By having both Robert and Mike agree to step in so quickly, we have been lucky to experience a smooth and seamless transition.

I would be doing a disservice to all our members if I did not also point out the participation levels at our meetings. Just as wonderful as our meetings were in 2023, they continued to carry over in 2024, as well. Many of the presentations during the year were from our own members, and I congratulate them for their interesting ideas and topics. At one of the 2024

meetings, the “Show-and-Tell” meeting, we had literally everyone involved – and it turned out to be great fun.

Finally, we closed out 2024 with a Holiday Dinner celebration in December at The W Tavern. There was no regular meeting agenda. Instead, it was a night just to enjoy the holiday season and the friendships between our club members. I think it was a real success for those who attended. If you have not been to a GPSCC Holiday Dinner in the past, you should put it on your calendar for next year. It is a great way to round out the year and the holidays.

Participation is the life blood of the GPSCC. So, I ask you to participate if you can, or continue to participate if you have in the past. Either way, it will stimulate energy for the club that will be paid back to you in hours of enjoyment in a hobby you enjoy with friends who have similar interests.

I look forward to seeing and hearing from you in 2025!

PROGRAM FOR JANUARY 21, 2025: “ALL SHOW-AND-TELL”

Our presenter at the first meeting of 2025 is you!

Bring something from your collection to share with the entire group. It could be something you think no one has seen before or something that just brings you joy. This is your opportunity to share your passion with other collectors. There might even be a prize for the most unusual, unique or popular item.

Plan on having five minutes to present. It could be more or less depending on attendance. You might even consider bringing a couple of items in case we have the time.



*Have an unusual item that was mailed? How about an odd shaped stamp? A great rarity?
A topical collection on something like cats? Then show it off on January 21!*

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showsevents@gpscc.org**UPCOMING CLUB MEETINGS**2025: Feb. 18 – Mar. 18 – Apr. 15 – May 20 – June 17 – Aug. 19 –
Sep. 16 – Oct. 21 – Nov. 18**UPCOMING EVENTS****February 15** – [Philatelic Gathering](#), 10:00 a.m.-noon, Chester County Historical Society, 225 N. High Street, West Chester, PA.**March 14-16** – [Garfield Perry March Party](#), Best Western Plus, 15471 Royalton Rd., Strongsville, OH.**March 29** – [DELPEX](#), Nur Shrine Center, 198 South DuPont highway (US 13 & 40), New Castle, DE.**April 5-6** – [SPRINGPEX 2025](#), John R. Lewis High School, 6540 Franconia Rd, Springfield VA.**April 18-20** – [Philatelic Show](#), Boxboro Regency Hotel & Conference Center, 242 Adams Place, Boxborough, MA.**June 6-8** – [NAPEX](#), McLean Hilton at Tyson's Corner, 7920 Jones Branch Dr., McLean VA.**June 21-22** – [SCOPEX](#), American Philatelic Center, Bellefonte PA.**CLUB MAILING ADDRESS**Greater Philadelphia Stamp &
Collectors Club
661 High Pointe Circle
Langhorne, PA 19047**WEB SITE**www.gpscc.org**FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM**[@gpscc19090](https://www.instagram.com/gpscc19090)**HAVE SOMETHING PHILATELIC YOU WANT TO SHARE?***The Philly Philatelist* is always interested in publishing articles by our members or other collectors.

Articles of any length are welcome. An article that is 750 words long with two or three images will fill

two pages. Just email the text in a Word file and the images as separate files to Mike Wilson at newsletter@gpscc.org.

Thanks!



MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 19, 2024, GPSCC MEETING

Paul Miller began the meeting announcing that at the present time 71% of the members have paid their dues. Mention was made of the members who were winners of the “GPSCC 2025 Membership Dues Sweepstakes.” These lucky 15 individuals were randomly selected to have free memberships in 2025. If you pay your dues by November 30, you get a \$2 discount, and it’s only \$10.

Speaking of bargains, Paul spoke about the American Philatelic Society’s (APS) partnership with Grouper. If you are at least 65 years old and part of a Medicare Advantage or Medicare Supplement program, you can join Grouper and receive benefits for just attending GPSCC meetings. By joining Grouper, you receive \$50 and then for every three months that you are engaged you get \$20. There’s no catch! Sign up at this [link](#).

Paul mentioned that the APS is announcing the Star Route Awards for club newsletters and websites today. Hopefully, our club newsletter will win once again.

In terms of elections for 2025, Mike Wilson will be stepping into the role of Vice President, in addition to being the editor of *The Philly Philatelist*. Thanks to

Phil Russell who did an excellent job for so many years. Much appreciated! By voice vote all other officers will continue their roles in 2025.

Tonight’s presentation by Louis Gotlib was titled “Liniments, Laxatives and a Congressman.” We learned about Demas Barnes, who studied mineral resources of the West and was a one-term Congressman. Barnes owned patent medicine companies and advertised his companies on tax or revenue stamps. Louis had bottles of these so-called “medicines” and literature, advertisements, etc. from Barnes and from others such as Charles Fletcher who was known for the laxative “Fletcher’s Castoria.” If you want to view his slide presentation once again it is on our [website](#).

There was discussion about the advantages of joining the American Topical Association (ATA). Several attending tonight are already members and have topical collections of their own. Also, the ATA is sponsoring “[My One Page Exhibit](#)” program for those who wish to participate. You don’t have to be member of the ATA to exhibit.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Cohen

ANNUAL HOLIDAY DINNER

Eleven members along with three spouses had a wonderful time at the GPSCC Annual Holiday Dinner on December 17, 2024, at The W Tavern. The highlight of the evening was having a chance to recognize and honor **Phil Russell** for serving as the club’s Vice President for 11 years. Phil did a wonderful job of running the meetings when needed and scheduling tremendous speakers, including though the dark days of the COVID pandemic.

While Phil has stepped down as Vice President, he remains an active club members. Indeed, be sure to attend the June 17, 2025, meeting when Phil will do a presentation on his collection of Colonial-era covers.



Phil Russell, seated in the middle, is recognized at the Annual Holiday Dinner. His wife Cynthia is on the left.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS STAMPS – FROM CANADA

Paul F. Miller

A little more than a year ago, I wrote an article (see pp. 8-9, [The Greater Philadelphia Stamp & Collectors Club Newsletter, December 2023](#)) about Christmas stamps and revealed that the first Christmas stamps were issued by Canada in 1898 (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Canada Scott 85 & 86

I indicated in that article that there was a whole story behind the creation of those Christmas stamps, but I did not have the time or the newsletter space to tell the complete story.

Since we are not too far past the Christmas holiday season, I wanted to follow up and let you know how it all unfolded.

The story of the world's first Christmas stamp begins in the summer of 1898, in London, England, with a Canadian named William Mulock.

Mulock was Canada's Postmaster General at the time. He had joined his British Commonwealth counterparts for an Imperial Conference on postage rates. The goal of the conference was to establish a common postage rate across the British Commonwealth.

While in London, Mulock luckily found time to speak directly to Queen Victoria about a new stamp he had in mind in the event that a common rate could be agreed upon.

Mulock's stamp idea may have been radical at the time because it would be the first stamp in Canada's history (up to that point in time) to be issued without a picture of the Queen or her relatives on it. Mulock

thought he should give the Queen a heads-up about that. In fact, the law required the Queen's permission before a queen-less stamp could be issued.

Mulock's idea featured a Mercator map, the type of map that projects the spherical Earth onto a flat plane. Countries that were part of the British Empire at the time were to appear in red, with the inscription "WE HOLD A VASTER EMPIRE THAN HAS BEEN" referring to a song by poet Sir Lewis Morris (1833–1907), "A Song of Empire," composed on June 20, 1887, in honor of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

An additional important aspect of Mulock's stamp idea was that the stamp would show Canada at the center of the vastness of the British Empire.

Queen Victoria was intrigued and curious about this stamp idea. However, she wondered "What was the point of issuing a stamp without my picture on it?"

Mulock suggested issuing the stamp on November 9 "in honor of the prince." Mulock's idea was meant to honor the Prince of Wales on his birthday (the Queen's oldest son, Albert Edward, later known as King Edward VII), but he did not quite say it that way. Queen Victoria was slightly put off by this and made her displeasure known immediately. She replied, "What Prince?"

She and her oldest son had a notoriously rocky relationship since Prince Albert's death in 1861. The Queen is said to have blamed her son and the stress caused by his "playboy prince" reputation for his father's death.

Mulock had to think fast on his feet before the Queen put the kibosh on his whole idea. He was able to turn the meeting around by replying "Why, madam, the Prince of Peace."

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS STAMPS – FROM CANADA (CONTINUED)

Proposing this new stamp to honor Christmas and the birth of Jesus satisfied Queen Victoria, and she approved the new stamp immediately for issue December 7, 1898, in advance of Christmas and the start of the new Imperial Penny Postage rate. The lettering “XMAS 1898” was added to the stamp to reinforce Mulock’s response to the Queen.

Thus, the first ever Christmas stamp was issued in conjunction with the introduction of the new Imperial Penny Postage rate that became effective on Christmas Day, 1898.

Had it not been for Mulock’s sharp mind and quick response to the Queen, there might not have been a story like this about the first ever Christmas stamp!

Other interesting facts...

- The 1898 Christmas stamp was the first Canadian stamp to feature multiple colors.

- The second stamp with a Christmas reference was issued 37 years later, in 1935, when British troops were given 1934 stamps overprinted with “Xmas 1935 – 3 Milliemes” to use on mail to their homes.
- Canada did not issue another Christmas stamp until 1964 (Figure 2). Thereafter, Canada has issued Christmas stamps on a more regular annual basis.



Figure 2: Canada Scott 434 and 435

GPSCC PROGRAMS FOR 2025

This is the line-up of meeting speakers thus far for 2025. There are two open dates: October 21 and November 18. If you would like to present something at one of those meetings, please email Mike Wilson at vpprograms@gpscc.org.

February 18: Alan Warren - The U.S. Byrd Antarctic Stamp: Production, First Day and Other Uses

March 18: Scott English, APS Executive Director - Future of Stamp Collecting

April 15: Ron Leshner - Pure Adulteration? Oleomargarine, Process Butter, Mixed Flour, Filled Cheese, and Fertilizer Taxes

May 20: Yamil Kouri - BOSTON 2026 (via zoom)

June 17: Phil Russell - Colonial Covers

August 19: Mac Sarreal - Philatelic Potpourri: Making Stamp Club Meetings More Engaging

Sept. 16: Thom Almerini - Modern History of Indonesia and Its Philatelic History



JOSEPH STEINMETZ AND THE U.S. ARMY'S ROUND-THE-WORLD FLIGHT OF 1924

Michael L. Wilson

In 1923, the U.S. Army Air Service decided that it would attempt to become the first group to circumnavigate the globe by airplane. This was an audacious undertaking, especially for a country that was not known for its prowess in aviation. Indeed, in the early 1920s, the United States was far behind European countries in this field.

In relatively short order, the U.S. Army Air Service developed a plane that could, in theory, complete the journey, and selected and trained four crews each consisting of a pilot and mechanic. I won't go into the details of the preparations and the flight itself. Those are well covered in an excellent article in the National Archives *Prologue Magazine* that is available [online](#). I also highly recommend a book titled, *Into Unknown Skies: An Unlikely Team, A Daring Race, and the First Flight Around the World* by David K. Randall. There is also silent footage of the journey on [YouTube](#).

All eight aviators survived with two teams completing the entire flight, but it was far from a quick journey. The teams departed Clover Field in Santa Monica, California on March 17, 1924, heading north to Seattle and Alaska and then west over the Pacific Ocean. They arrived back in the United States in Mere Point, Maine on September 5, 1924. After stops in more than a dozen cities in the U.S., including Boston on September 6, the aviators made their final landing in Seattle on September 28, 1924. All told, they were in the air for more than 363 hours over 175 calendar days and traveled in excess of 26,000 miles.

Not surprisingly given concerns about weight, none of the planes carried mail on the journey, but that did not stop philatelists from finding ways to celebrate the accomplishment.

One such individual was Philadelphia native, Joseph Steinmetz (1870-1928). Here is a brief overview of his life from a January 1987 article by Stanley M. Bierman

that appeared in *The Chronicle*, the publication of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society:

Steinmetz should be...remembered...for his pioneering work in aviation and national air defense, a distinguished career as a mechanical engineer, and by philately, in great measure, for his remarkable showing at the 1913 New York International Philatelic Exhibition. Described as "a brilliantly organized philatelic achievement," the Steinmetz Exhibit which was entitled, in part, "Talismans of the Arabian Nights of Stampdom," included critical Government correspondences regarding the manufacture of U.S. postage stamps during the 1851-60 period, preserved in large measure for scholars through his own particular intervention. Steinmetz also possessed a major U.S., Essay-Proof, Foreign and Aerophilatelic collection, and played a key financial role in the acquisition of the pane of the 1918 inverted flying Jenny.

Steinmetz was present at the start of the round-the-world flight at Clover Field and was in Boston when the aviators alighted there. His presence in Boston even garnered a mention in the *Boston Globe* of September 2, 1924.

Figure 1 (next page) shows a 1-cent postal card (listed as Scott UX27) prepared by Steinmetz and postmarked at the airport station in Boston on September 5, 1924, with a slogan killer cancellation reading "BOSTON FIRST LANDING in U.S. of WORLD FLIERS." The aviators expected Boston to be their first stop back in the U.S., but due to weather, they ended up spending the night of September 5 in Mere Point, Maine, between Brunswick and Portland. They finally arrived in Boston on September 6 to great fanfare. Thus, weather explains the discrepancy between the postmark and cancellation and the actual sequence of events.

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JOSEPH STEINMETZ AND THE U.S. ARMY'S ROUND-THE-WORLD FLIGHT OF 1924 (CONTINUED)

Steinmetz addressed the postal card to James Bothwell in Seattle and wrote on the message side:

Sept 5, 1924

Dear Mr. Bothwell: Here we are down at Boston's new Airport awaiting arrival of our boys from Around the World Flight.

I was out at Clover Field when they started off & must now greet 'em when they arrive. Did not get here yesterday - got stuck in fog off Maine somewhere, but will surely be here tomorrow. This mail will be held here anyhow until they arrive. Please mail a few of these cards back to me.

Sincerely,
Jos. A. Steinmetz

Bothwell franked the postal card with the required 1-cent in postage (the stamp depicts Benjamin

Franklin and is listed as Scott 552), had it postmarked on September 28, 1924, when the flyers landed in Seattle, and mailed it to Steinmetz at his business address in Philadelphia.

The special Boston postmark is listed in the *American Air Mail Catalogue*, 7th edition, volume 3 as AAMC #168. Per this catalogue, "The special airmail was dispatched by plane to New York to connect with regular transcontinental service. None of this mail was carried by the fliers." I suspect this postcard, however, did not travel by plane to Seattle since at the time, the air mail rate started at 8-cents per ounce per zone and there were three zones between the East and West Coasts. It is highly unlikely this postal card with 1-cent of postage would have been given special treatment. Consequently, this is not an air mail piece, but rather a regular piece of mail associated with an historical aviation event and a famous philatelist. That's what makes it special.

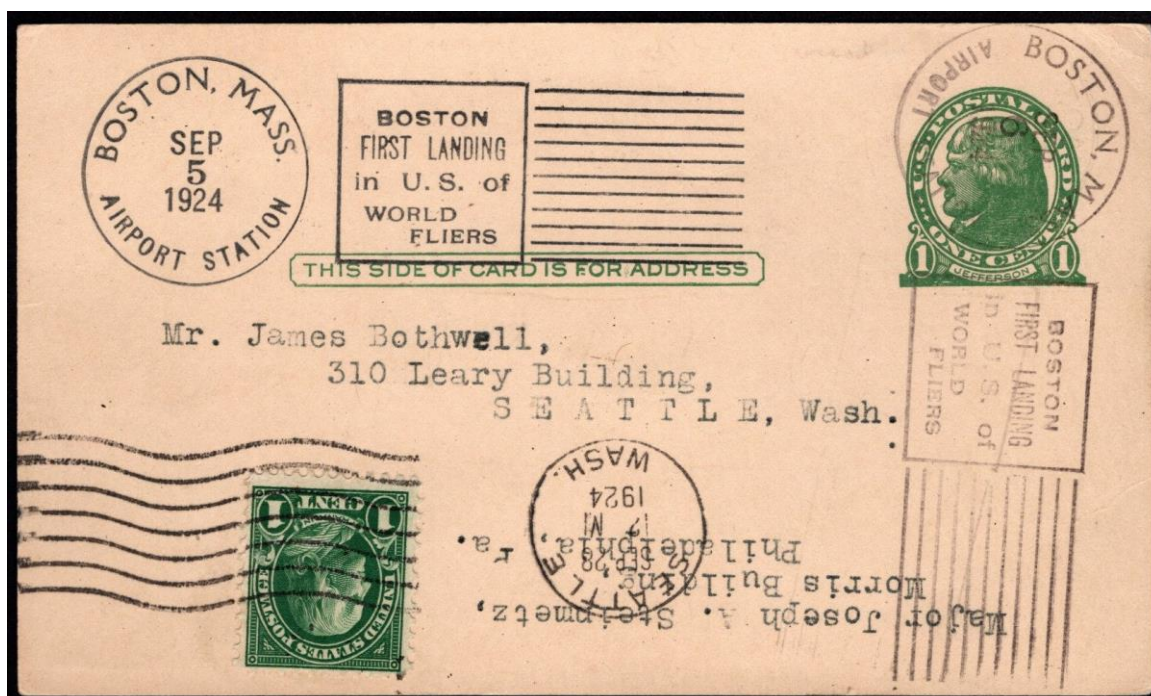


Figure 1 - Address side of postal card that Joseph Steinmetz mailed to Seattle from Boston on September 5, 1924. It was mailed from Seattle back to Steinmetz at his Philadelphia business address on September 28, 1924.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Alan Warren

At the CHICAGOPEX exhibition held in Itasca, Illinois in November, **Vernon Morris, Jr.** had his “World’s Third Producer of Stamps: Philadelphia Local Post and Fee Reduction, 1842-1861” in the single frame championship competition. At the same show **Mark Schwartz** received a gold for his “The Barr-Fyke Cancels of Chicago.”

Michael L. Wilson describes a fascinating plane crash cover in his article in the Winter 2024 issue of *La Posta: The Journal of American Postal History*. It ties together interesting subjects including noted philatelist John N. Luff and the magician Harry Houdini. The letter was sent from New York and changed planes, eventually to be carried from Cleveland to Chicago on September 15, 1919. On this

last leg the plane stalled out and crashed, and most of the mail was lost except for three covers, one of which Mike now owns.

The letter was mailed from a New York hotel, and the handwriting of the address appears to be that of John Luff. The recipient was August Roterberg, a manufacturer of magicians’ equipment. He was a good friend of Harry Houdini. Roterberg sold his business and focused on collecting and selling stamps.



DID YOU KNOW?

Michael L. Wilson

According to [Stanley Gibbons](#):

John Bourke, receiver-general of stamp dues in Ireland, is widely considered the world's first collector.

Over 65 years before the Penny Black was introduced to the world [in 1840], Bourke assembled a book of the existing embossed revenue stamps at the time.

The collection included denominations from half a penny to six pounds and also included the hand-stamped charge marks that were often used with them.

Bourke’s album titled, *A Collection of Impressions of Irish Stamps: Written for the Use of H.M. Commissioners of the Revenue in Ireland*, is housed at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin.

Ken Lawrence wrote an article for *Scott Stamp Monthly* in December 2009 that describes Bourke’s collection as well as those of other early collectors.

You can read Ken’s article “The Oldest Stamp Collection: A Sequel” [online](#).



The Royal Irish Academy Library.

PHILATELIC GATHERING OF NOVEMBER 23, 2024

About a dozen collectors gathered in a cozy room on the 3rd floor of the Chester County Historical Society (CCHS) for the November 23 Philatelic Gathering.

This was the last gathering of the year. Before the program, Kean Spencer reminded the group that we use the CCHS free of charge and that any donations to the CCHS would be appreciated. He said we will meet again in February 2025 and reminded everyone to reach out to him if they want to present next year.

Kean then kicked off the program with “Puerto Rico Revenue Stamps 1899-Present.” Kean’s presentation was based on his exhibit of these stamps at PURIPEX 2024. This has not been a well-studied area of philately, but there is a ground swell of activity and excitement as collectors learn of the unique insight Puerto Rican revenue stamps offer into the history and economy of the island after it became a U.S. possession in 1898.

He noted that although Puerto Rico used overprinted BEP-produced revenue stamps, all the tax revenue collected was kept on the island. Puerto Rico taxed a wide variety of goods including documents, coffee, salt, narcotics, matches, gasoline, chewing tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes. They also collected tax on tobacco products and spirits sold on the mainland. The era of revenue stamps on Puerto Rico ended in the 1970s with one exception: “colegio” stamps. To this day, Puerto Rico collects taxes on professional services such as legal advice, veterinary care, and plumbing, with the revenue collected supporting educational institutions that teach those professions.

For those interested in pursuing this line of collecting, Kean called attention to the *Catalogue of Puerto Rico Revenues: U.S. Administration, Sept. 1989-Present* by Gregg Greenwald.

Dr. Charles J. DiComo then presented “From the U.S. to Farther India & Back Again: A Five-Month Journey of a Baptist Missionary Cover in 1856-1857.”

Charlie provided a riveting account of how he unraveled the postal journey and personal history behind a cover with more than 20 cancellation and manuscript markings. He described the philatelic and genealogical references he used, as well as digital manipulation tools such as Photoshop and retroReveal.org (what is now postmark-reveal.com).

The cover - initially with 90-cents of postage of which only 6-cents remained when Charlie acquired it - was sent from Ohio to a missionary named Reverend Alfred Brown Satterlee who, together with his pregnant wife Sally, had recently arrived in what is today Myanmar. Satterlee sadly passed away before the letter arrived, so it was returned to the United States. Sally and her newborn daughter also sailed back to the United States. Sally died on board ship, but her daughter, Emily, survived and lived to the ripe old age of 88.

Charlie figured out that the cover initially included 84-cents of postage in the form of seven 12-cent stamps from the Series of 1851. By researching auction catalogs, Charlie tracked down a block of six that had been removed from the cover. The block clearly came from the cover because the postmarks matched up exactly. Charlie is still on the lookout for the seventh 12-cent stamp to complete the cover’s reconstruction.

Seven of the attendees then adjourned to the Iron Hill Brewery for lunch and discussion.

For more information on joining the Philatelic Gathering, contact Kean Spencer (keanwspencer@gmail.com) or Dr. Charles J. DiComo (charlesdicomo@gmail.com).

