



THE PHILLY PHILATELIST

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

Founded 1904

American Philatelic Society – Chapter 18

September 2024

www.GPSCC.org

Volume 12, Issue 8

NEXT MEETING

September 17, 2024 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

IN THIS ISSUE

	Page
President's Message	1-2
September 17, 2024 Program	2
Upcoming Events	3
Minutes of the August Meeting	4
"Arthur Barger – The American Dealer Who Shaped Philately in the Spanish Civil War," J. Balsells	5-8
Honors and Awards	9
Did You Know?	9
Philatelic Gathering	10
An Ode to the Editor	10



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Paul F. Miller

As we begin this transition from summer to fall, I want to devote my message to some brief but important topics. Please continue to read because each of these topics may have an important impact on you through the remainder of the year.

Stamp Shows/Events

The Great America Stamp Show (GASS) has come and gone. It was a wonderful event. I attended and so did a number of Greater Philadelphia Stamp & Collectors Club (GPSCC) members. It sounded like it was a big success. I am waiting to hear what the American Philatelic Society (APS) has to say about the participation and satisfaction levels by attendees.

Not only was it a great event to mingle with like-minded collectors and dealers, but there were plenty of fantastic exhibits. It is amazing to see the time and effort that many collectors put into their exhibits.

If you missed GASS, there are several upcoming stamp shows in the general area. Make sure you read the "Upcoming Events" section of the newsletter to see if something interests you. Of particular note are NOJEX and BALPEX coming up this fall. Both shows have new venues, new show dates, and are trying to put their best foot forward in presenting a show that appeals to many collectors. NOJEX has been on hiatus for a few years due to COVID and scheduling issues, so I hope they are successful. Try to attend some shows, as these are key factors in keeping the stamp collecting community alive and thriving.

Newsletter Articles

Be sure you check out this month's excellent article by **Jaume Balsells**. Not only is it very interesting, but it marks the second time Jaume has submitted an article this year for the newsletter.

(Continued on next page)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

That means that Jaume has answered the call for article submissions in 2024! If you remember, back in my February 2024 "President's Message," I offered to pay 2025 membership dues for anyone who writes and has published two articles in the newsletter during 2024. Thanks to Jaume's great efforts, I will happily sponsor Jaume's 2025 membership. Congratulations to Jaume! His efforts are greatly appreciated.

The current offer is still standing for the remainder of the year. If you have ideas bouncing around in your head, put them down on paper and get them sent in to Mike for publishing!

2025 Membership Dues

Membership dues reminder notices for 2025 will be going out in the mail soon. In the past, I had advocated for free current year memberships to all new members in an effort to boost our ranks and participation. This has been an outward-facing benefit offered by the Club. For 2025, I want to turn the free membership option to an inward-facing

benefit. By that, I mean I want to use the free membership option for current members as a way to thank you for being a member and for continuing to be a member of GPSCC. The Club has no purpose if it has no members, so I want to acknowledge you for your participation.

So, there will be a random selection of fifteen (15) existing members who will receive free memberships in 2025. I will sponsor the 2025 membership dues of those randomly selected members. This opportunity is available to all members, even existing Club Officers. This will be known as the "GPSCC 2025 Membership Dues Sweepstakes."

If you are randomly selected, you will receive the normal 2025 membership dues notice in the mail, but there will be an additional page notifying you that your dues are waived for 2025! Keep your fingers crossed for that lucky selection.

Regardless of the results, please know that your continued membership in the GPSCC is greatly appreciated.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 PROGRAM: "CONTRACT AIR MAIL: THE CATALYST OF COMMERCIAL AVIATION," BY MICHAEL L. WILSON

GPSCC member **Mike Wilson** will present "Contract Air Mail: The Catalyst of Commercial Aviation." His presentation will discuss how Contract Air Mail (CAM) came to be in the 1920s and how it spearheaded the commercial aviation industry we know today. His presentation will be illustrated by air mail covers from the earliest days of aviation through the end of the first phase of CAM in 1934.



OFFICERS*President*

Paul Miller

president@gpscc.org*VP & Programs*

Phil Russell

vpprograms@gpscc.org*Treasurer*

Bruce Marsden

treasurer@gpscc.org*Secretary*

Robert Cohen

secretary@gpscc.org*Newsletter*

Michael L. Wilson

newsletter@gpscc.org*Shows & Events*

Alan Warren

showsevents@gpscc.org**UPCOMING CLUB MEETINGS**

Oct. 15 – Nov. 19 – Dec. 17 (Holiday Dinner)

UPCOMING EVENTSSeptember 27-29 – [NOJEX 2024](#), Hilton Hotel, 650 Terrace Ave., Hasbrouck Heights NJ.October 25-27 – [BALPEX](#), BWI Marriott Hotel, 1743 West Nursery Road, Linthicum Heights, MD.October 26 – [Eastern PA Stamp Show](#) (EPASS), Schnecksville Fire Company, 4550 Old Packhouse Road, Schnecksville, PA. Bourse onlyNovember 15-16 – [Postal History Symposium](#), American Philatelic Center, Bellefonte PA.November 22-23 – [K2 Lancaster Stamp Show](#), Farm and Home Center 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster, PA.

Note: The October 14-16 “Intermediate/Advanced Exhibiting” seminar by GPSCC member Bill Schultz and the October 23-24 BALPEX Postal History Symposium have been cancelled.

**NEW CLUB MAILING ADDRESS!**

Greater Philadelphia Stamp & Collectors Club
661 High Pointe Circle
Langhorne, PA 19047

WEB SITEwww.gpscc.org**FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM**[@gpscc19090](https://www.instagram.com/gpscc19090)**SAVE THE DATE – ANNUAL HOLIDAY DINNER**

The Club's annual holiday dinner is scheduled for December 17, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. The event will take place at The W Tavern, 210 York Road. Keep your eye out for an e-mail invitation. Hope to see you there!

HAVE SOMETHING PHILATELIC YOU WANT TO SHARE?

The Philly Philatelist is always interested in publishing articles by our members or other collectors. Anyone who writes two articles this year will receive free membership for 2025. Articles of any length are welcome. An article that is 750 words long with two or three images will fill two pages. To make it easy on the editor, email the text in a Word file and the images as separate files to Mike Wilson at newsletter@gpscc.org. Thanks!

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 20, 2024, GPSCC MEETING

Paul Miller reintroduced Dean Fowler who is now officially a member of the GPSCC.

Speaking of membership, when Paul was at the Great American Stamp Show (GASS) he used a table there to spread word about our club. We now have 55 members in our club. Hopefully, we will see an increase in our membership soon. Bill Wikoff, fellow collector from California, was also in attendance at tonight's meeting.

Paul informed members that the post office box is now closed after some confusion. All mail will now go directly to Paul's address. A decision will be made about where to send money for dues shortly, as reminders will be sent out in early October.

Tonight's presentation was from member Thomas Almerini entitled, "Collecting on a Budget" or as he refers to it, "NY Yankees Taste on an Oakland A's Budget." His background is as a data collection manager or basically a statistician. He has worked for the Census Bureau in places like West Virginia and Harrisburg. Like many of us, he has collected stamps since he was in elementary school. He has also collected bottle caps, cigar labels and baseball cards, all on a budget. Thomas talked about how to buy stamps, storage options and when to trade and sell.

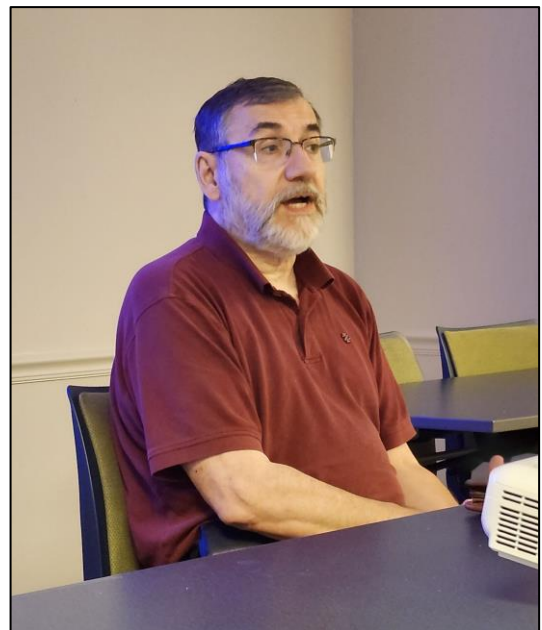
Several members attended the GASS. Paul Miller spoke to the owners of Noble Spirit Online Auction House when he was there. They are interested in doing road shows in the Philadelphia area. All who attended spoke about the number and different kinds of exhibits and the ability to socialize with other collectors. Fellow GPSCC members Mark Schwartz and Vernon Morris won awards for their exhibits at GASS.

In other news, Paul indicated that Siegel Auctions sold the U.S. Scott 85A 1-cent Z grill up for \$3.7 million. This stamp belonged to Bill Gross.

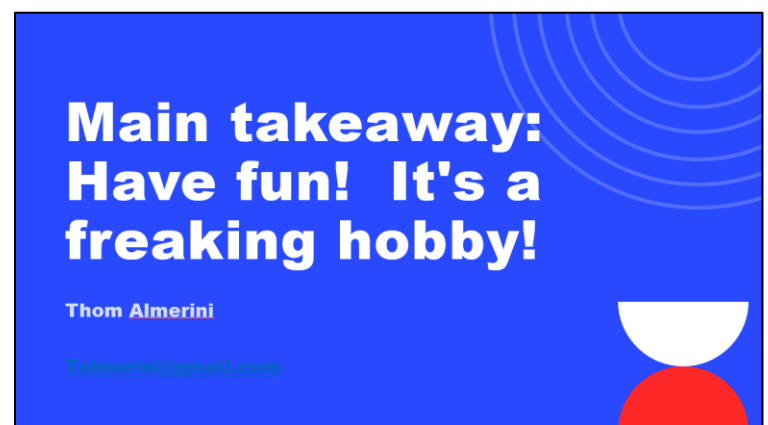
Vernon Morris will speak at the Philatelic Gathering at the Chester County Historical Society in September.

Mike Wilson spoke about donating stamps to Stamps for the Wounded. Thomas Almerini added that Boys Town will still take stamps that are on paper.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Cohen



Thom Almerini during his presentation.



Thom's spot-on closing slide.

ARTHUR BARGER – THE AMERICAN DEALER WHO SHAPED PHILATELY IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Jaume Balsells



150th Anniversary of the U.S. Constitution, Scott 585c.
Souvenir sheet signed by Arthur Barger on first day of issue.
125,000 souvenir sheets issued, estimated 92,500 sold.

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) remains a pivotal and contentious chapter in European history, characterized by intense ideological conflict and international involvement. Emerging from deep-rooted political tensions within Spanish society, the war pitted the Republican government, supported by leftist militias and international volunteers, against General Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces, backed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Beyond its immediate impact on Spain, the conflict served as a precursor to World War II, influencing global politics and ideologies for decades to come.

The war started after the military, backed by conservative parties, rose in a coup against the left-leaning Republican Government. While the coup failed to topple the Government, it succeeded in breaking the country in two factions. The ensuing bloodshed would last for three years, claiming over 500,000 lives.

The war sparked a vast interest in Spanish philately of the period, which raised cash for many organizations and made several dealers rich. The rebel side saw an explosion of loosely sanctioned locally overprinted issues and a plethora of purposely created errors and varieties of said overprints. The Government side saw many political and activist organizations selling charity labels and Cinderellas that could be added to letters, albeit without any postal value.* By the end of 1937, the philatelic interest created by the war would become a way for both sides to raise needed cash to fund the war.

In February of 1938, the Republican Government created the Agencia Filatelica Oficial (AFO), an official philatelic agency with the objectives of (a) ensuring that profits from stamp sales to collectors would go to the Government by limiting or banning the sales of charity labels and Cinderellas and (b) producing stamps that would be attractive to collectors, especially those abroad that would result in foreign revenue for the country. In order to develop a program of new stamp issues, they hired New York based stamp dealer Arthur Barger, who arrived in Spain in November of 1937. Barger settled in Barcelona, a large city with good printing capabilities but further away from the front than Madrid, which had been besieged since the beginning of the war.



Arthur Barger (2nd from right, with hat and glasses) visits the Rieusset printing works in Barcelona.
Source: R. Shelley.

BARGER AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR (CONTINUED)

Barger is the figure behind the Republican commemorative stamp issues from 1938 until the end of the war. The “Defense of Madrid” and “Anniversary of the U.S. Constitution” are Barger’s two flagship creations, with their multiple versions of regular mail, airmail overprints, and souvenir sheets. Semi-postal issues are the norm for the period and new stamp designs alternate with overprinted reissues of older stamps, which were cheaper and faster to produce. Many of the stamps were sold at a high surcharge over face value and could only be purchased in foreign currency.



Commemoration of the heroic defense of Madrid against Franco’s army in the early days of the war, Scott B106C. Imperforated souvenir sheet. 100,000 souvenir sheets issued (both perforated and imperforated).

While this is all well-known information other authors have reported about, the cover and documents I am presenting portray a different facet of Barger’s work: the promotion of Spanish Republican stamp issues abroad. I acquired it in 2021 from a dealer in New York, as part of a lot of mixed Spanish covers that had likely sat in a dealer’s stock for decades. It was sent by Barger on February 1, 1938, to Harry Lindquist in New York. Lindquist was for many years the editor of *Stamps* magazine and was likely instrumental in advertising Barger’s issues to the American collector.



Cover from February 1938 from Barcelona to New York sent by Arthur Barger to Harry Lindquist to promote the philatelic issues of the Spanish Republic.

This large envelope weighed 77g (2.7 oz) with its contents at the time I acquired it. Its postage of 12 pesetas, however, suggests it could have contained some additional documents. The main item inside the cover is a copy of the Government’s official newspaper, *Gaceta de la Republica*, from February 1, 1938. A manuscript note from Barger on the first page reads: “See page 538-539. Important to have translated. AB”. The pages in question detail Government orders for the creation of the Philatelic Agency and for restricting the printing of charity and political labels by other organizations. It seems as if Barger wanted to delegitimize any stamp issues not coming from the Agency.



Gaceta de la Republica from February 1, 1938, with manuscript note from Arthur Barger.

BARGER AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR (CONTINUED)

The second item in the cover is the first page of the Barcelona Newspaper *La Noche*, featuring at the bottom the designs of the Defense of Madrid and U.S. Constitution issues. It is noteworthy that the newspaper is dated January 25, 1938, but the stamps were issued on April 15 and June 1, respectively. The third and last item was a small envelope with Arthur Barger's letterhead printed, and the text "Proofs of the new issues – postage and airmail" typewritten. This small envelope was empty when I acquired the cover.



First page of the newspaper "La Noche" from January 25, 1938, featuring the designs of the Defense of Madrid and U.S. Constitution stamps.

I have not been able to find issues of Lindquist's *Stamps* magazine from 1938, and it would be interesting to see how he reported about these stamps to the American public. It seems that, at the time, the promotion of these issues was not the success the Government was hoping for. For some issues, more than half of the stamps printed were not sold. This was due to multiple factors. First, half of the country was on the enemy's side and didn't even know about these stamps. And on the Republican side, primary necessities were the only priority for most of the population. In addition, none of these issues made it into post offices and they could only be purchased from the Philatelic Agency in foreign currency, at a very unfavorable exchange rate. For example, Oswald Schier writes that in 1939, the Defense of Madrid airmail souvenir sheet (Scott CB6b) could be purchased in the United States for \$10 (approximately 10 times the face value). Then

there was the uncertainty of how long the Republic could last in the war and the flood of overprinted stamps from the Nationalist side. (Both Scott and Stanley Gibbons had stopped listing those issues.)



150th Anniversary of the U.S. Constitution, imperforate sheet margin copies of the regular postage stamp and airmail overprint, Scott 585a and C97a respectively. Stamps issued: 300,000 of Scott 585 (estimated 120,000 sold, both perf and imperf) and 10,000 of Scott C97 (estimated 5,200 sold, both perf and imperf).

Decades have passed after the war and, today, these issues remain quite popular. Collectors have learned to appreciate their significance and scarcity. Barger produced other significant issues of the Spanish Republic such as the submarine mail set (Scott 605A-605G) and the Militia set (Scott 606-614). Without a doubt, however, the Defense of Madrid and U.S. Constitution sets are the most emblematic issues of the Spanish Republic during the civil war, a period when democracy fought fascism and lost, sending the country into 40 years of a brutal dictatorship.

BARGER AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR (CONTINUED)



150th Anniversary of the US constitution, souvenir sheet with airmail overprint, Scott C97c. 3,000 souvenir sheets issued.



Commemoration of the defense of Madrid. Souvenir sheet with airmail overprint, Scott CB6b. 1,200 souvenir sheets issued.

Barger returned to the United States at the conclusion of the civil war. He remained active in philately as a dealer, author, and editor over the rest of his life. Incidentally, I learned from a dealer based in Southern California that in the late 1980s they had purchased Barger’s stock of issues from the Spanish Republic from his widow, which I believe was his second wife. It appears that Barger took with him a sizeable lot of stamps, proofs, and other philatelic material from Spain, that eventually made its way into the collectors’ market.

~~~~~

\* The author’s research has identified one exception, where a Marxist political party in Catalonia established a mail service to the war front, using different charity or political labels as a way of postage.

### References:

- 1) Scott and Edifil Specialized Catalogues
- 2) *A Guide to the Postal History of the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* by Ron Shelley
- 3) *Manual de la Filatelia Española* by Dr. Oswald Schier

About the author: Jaume Balsells (pictured at right during his April 2024 presentation, “The Spanish Isabella Issues of 1855-1859”) collects Spain and Colonies and Greenland Parcel Post. Jaume also was the author of “Finding George Read” that you can read on pages 5-8 of the [May 2024](#) issue of *The Philly Philatelist*.





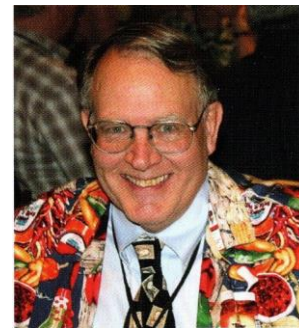
## AWARDS AND HONORS

*Alan Warren*

**Vern Morris** had two exhibits in the Champion of Champions competition at the GASS exhibition in Hartford, Connecticut in August. Both “Evolution of American Mail 1685 to 1799” and “Evolution and Impact of Blood’s Local Post: 1842 to 1862” received a prix d’honneur.

In the open competition, **Mark Schwartz’s** “The 5¢ Virginia Dare Stamp of 1937” won a large gold, the American First Day Cover Society’s (AFDCS) “Marge Finger Award” for most popular FDC exhibit, and the AFDCS “Richard H. Thompson Reserve Grand Award.”

At the APS membership meeting held Saturday morning, club member **Bob Rufe** was awarded his 50-year APS membership pin.



*Lloyd de Vries, president of the AFDCS presenting the “Marge Finger Award” to Mark Schwartz( left); Vernon Morris (middle); and Bob Rufe (right).*

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Paul F. Miller*

On September 7, 2004, Swiss Post issued its first-ever wooden stamp. Worth five Swiss francs, the “Swiss wood” stamp, naturally, is dedicated to Swiss wood. It is made of high-quality fir and is 0.7 mm thick (roughly the thickness of a credit card).

The unique stamp was designed by Thomas Rathgeb, a graphic artist who worked for Swiss Post. The stamps are made from 120-year-old pines felled in northern Switzerland.

The Swiss Post commented at the time, “Rathgeb's design focuses on the sustainability and uniqueness of this natural, living material — the structure of the wood, integrated into the contemporary design, produces a different picture on each stamp. This

makes each stamp unique, just as each tree is unique.”

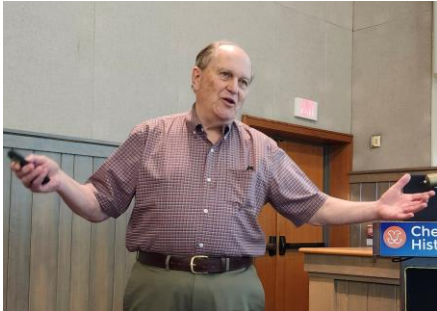
A quick search on eBay (Switzerland Scott 1188) indicates that you can purchase one of these for \$12.00 to \$20.00. HipStamp has copies for even less, including a first day cover for \$5.00. Watch out for splinters!



### PHILATELIC GATHERING

Alan Warren

The August 24 Philatelic Gathering began with Bill DeWitt telling the story of how his great-grandfather, in a sense, got Bill interested in trains and the U.S. 1869 U.S. 3¢ stamp, Scott 114. He described the connection with the Hudson River Valley Institute and showed a cover with an imprint of that organization bearing a pair of the stamps.



Bill DeWitt

Bob Rufe then described his quest for U.S. booklet panes with a focus on Scott 375a, the 2¢ carmine of 1910. He created his own album pages. He illustrated the sheet layout showing the positions of the various pane varieties and the guidelines and plate numbers. He is still seeking a few specific plate numbers.



Bob Rufe

Tom Geiger wrapped up the morning. Tom was already selling stamps as a kid doing business as “Turtle’s Trading Post.” He discovered eBay in 1998 and studied how sellers were conducting business. He then created his own operation and evolved a system for buying, selling, storing, and shipping materials. In retirement it is not a business but an extension of the hobby that keeps him active.



Tom Geiger

The Philatelic Gathering meets at the Chester County Historical Society located at 225 N. High Street, West Chester, Pennsylvania. An optional lunch follows the presentations. The Philatelic Gathering is open to any collector. Several members of the GPSCC are regular attendees, so you’ll see some familiar faces if you attend. You’ll also meet a number of collectors from elsewhere in the area.

For more information on joining the Philatelic Gathering, contact Kean Spencer ([keanwspencer1@gmail.com](mailto:keanwspencer1@gmail.com)) or Dr. Charles J. DiComo ([charlesdicomo@gmail.com](mailto:charlesdicomo@gmail.com)).



### PAUL F. MILLER, THE PHILATELIC POET!

There once was an editor named Mike,  
Who was a guy you could easily like,  
He was friendly and kind and great with a pen,  
And could quickly edit a newsletter with pages of ten,  
He loves stamp collecting, so we’re alike!

For background on this little ditty, see *The Philly Philatelist*, [August 2024](#), page 7. Any other poets out there?