



# WILKINSBURG STAMP CLUB NEWS

**Volume 19, Issue 6, January 2021**

*Wilkinsburg Stamp Club is a member of APS #12293*

[www.wilkinsburgstampclub.com](http://www.wilkinsburgstampclub.com)

Meeting Schedule: **No meetings currently scheduled** - see below

**WILKPEX 2021 is currently scheduled for Saturday August 7 and Sunday August 8 2021 – Holiday Park Fire Hall, Plum – 415 Old Abers Creek Road 15239**

## WSC Meeting Schedule

Because of the increased rate of Covid infections, we have cancelled our meetings for the near future. Please continue to monitor our website to see when we will again meet.



**Goodbye 2020! Hello 2021!**



**Happy New Year! Stay Healthy and Safe!**

## Wilkinsburg Stamp Club News

- It is with great sorrow that we announce the death of member Paul “Bob” Ginther, who passed away on December 21<sup>st</sup>. A well respected member of the club, he will greatly missed.
- Circuits – The club is still getting circuits and if you want to get involved please contact Danielle! This is a great way to look to fill holes in your collection or start a new topical collection!
- 2021 Club Picnic – We will have a picnic on July 31, 2021, at the usual pavilion area at Monroeville Park.
- WILKPEX 2021 – It will be Saturday and Sunday August 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Hall setup will be Friday evening. Keep working on your exhibits and getting your Phlea Market materials together!
- We are also looking for ideas for the 2021 Souvenir Sheet. Remember it should be a spoof of a current stamp that is timely (such as anything to do with COVID).
- It has been proposed that we use Gene Kelly as our cachet for 2021. The interest in sports-themed cachets seems to have waned, so we'll try the arts in Pittsburgh and see how those are received.

## Philatelic News

- The USPS is still having problems with delivering mail on time because of the pandemic, extra volume from the holidays, and internal issues. I have not received a copy of Linns (or any other magazine) for 3 weeks, hopefully the next newsletter will have a lot of current news to share!

## Member Information

- If you would like to have your “wish list” of stamps included in the newsletter, please send it to me via email or regular mail.
- If you know anyone who is looking to get rid of their stamp collection, ask them if they'd consider donating it to the club.

# The Accidental First Christmas Stamp



We all know that the first Christmas stamp was issued in Canada in 1898. But did you know how that stamp came to be?

In 1898, British lawmakers decided to implement a uniform postage rate for the colonies; the new rate would let anyone in the colonies send a letter anywhere in the British Empire for just a penny. Each colony could design its own stamp, but it still needed to secure Queen Victoria's approval.

William Mulock, Canada's postmaster general, helped design a Canadian Stamp that reflected the grandeur of the British Empire and promoted the new uniform rate. Referred to know as the Map Stamp, Canada's stamp depicted a world map with all of the British colonies colored red. The tagline, "We Hold A Vaster Empire Than Has Ever Been" was taken from "A Song of Empire", composed in honor of the 50th anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign. Since the stamp glorified the British Empire and its monarch, it seemed certain to secure the royal seal of approval.

So how did Christmas get involved with this decidedly non-Christmasy postage stamp? When the Duke of Norfolk, Great Britain's postmaster general, presented the Canadian stamp to Queen Victoria, she asked him when the stamp would be issued. Since the new postage rate was to come into effect on November 9th, 1898, the birthday of Edward, the Prince of Wales, he answered "On the prince's birthday". A bit miffed since she had 4 sons and he had not specified which one, the queen replied "Which prince?" The duke, recovering quickly from his presumptive error, answered "The Prince of Peace", which placated the queen. "XMAS 1898" was added, and the first Christmas stamp was born.

# Why Stamp Collectors Hated a 1972 Stamp Designed Just for Them

By Cara Giaimo - Atlas Obscura - April 27, 2017



THE EARLY 1970S WERE A boom time for postage stamps. The U.S. Postal Service, which had reorganized itself at the beginning of the decade, cranked up production and was releasing ever more—and ever more interesting—designs. “Larger stamps, with more color, and many varieties of novelty, seem to be the order of the day,” wrote *Boys’ Life* in 1972. Where collectors once had to choose largely between different versions of the same great men, they could now get women, animals, buildings, and more.

Despite all these riches, there was still one topic you couldn’t collect a stamp about: stamp collecting. To a certain segment of enthusiasts, this was a disappointment. According to R.R. Higgins—author of the column “The Stamp Man,” which ran in the *The Republic* newspaper of Columbus, Indiana—philatelists frequently wrote in to the USPS specifically to request a stamp-collecting stamp.

So in October of 1972, the Postal Service announced that they would soon throw a bone to this particular species of loyal customer. The next month—on the 125th anniversary of the very first official U.S. postage stamp—they would release a commemorative stamp to honor stamp collecting. They hired one Frank E. Livia to design it, and it would cost eight cents. They even invented a new size for it: “semi-jumbo,” a compromise between the normal commemorative size and the “jumbo” size, which had recently been invented for a wildlife-themed set.

This news pleased collectors. “Stamp collecting, the hobby of millions in this country, gets its due recognition,” opined the *Associated Press*. “The thought occurs to me that it is also being issued during Thanksgiving season,” wrote Higgins. “No doubt the USPS is... issuing up prayers of Thanksgiving for the money we have poured into their coffers.” His and other columns printed news

of the upcoming design, complete with somewhat tautological ordering instructions: “Collectors may send self-addressed envelopes with remittance... to ‘Stamp Collecting Stamp, Postmaster, New York, NY 10001.’”

Livia took his assignment quite literally. He based his design around the first ever U.S. postage stamp, which was released in 1847 and featured a portrait of Benjamin Franklin. Over the course of his career, Franklin served as postmaster general several times—first for Philadelphia, then for the British-helmed American colonies, and finally, after the Second Continental Congress, for the newly declared independent colonies.

Although stamps did not exist during Franklin’s lifetime, when the U.S. did start issuing them, in March of 1847, they chose to honor their first postmaster by using his portrait. Livia placed an entire, exact replica of the 5-cent Franklin Stamp smack in the middle of his 8-cent Stamp Collecting Stamp. A large black magnifying glass juts into the frame, completely encircling the Franklin stamp (which, despite the instrument’s presence, seems to maintain its original size). On the right side, a white serif font declares the theme: “Stamp Collecting.” The “8” in “8c.” is huge—it looks, fittingly, like a vertical infinity sign. The background color is a swingin’ ’70s turquoise.

When the stamp was finally released, it was greeted with both confusion and derision. In the *Asbury Park Press*, a stamp columnist called it a “postal horror.” “Hopefully, postal officials will learn some day that there is a difference between poster art and stampic art,” he wrote, derisively. “The new issue looks more like a label issued by the West Burlap Stamp Club.” To make matters worse (the stamp is bad—and such small portions!) production was delayed for weeks, because the government’s go-to adhesive makers went on strike. (This was probably a coincidence.)

Compared to the era’s hits—such as June 1972’s four-in-one Cape Hatteras stamp quadriptych, which got rave reviews—this was a certifiable dud. Today, you can find one for sale for just 60 cents, which, with inflation, is barely more than the 8 cents it cost when it came out. But that doesn’t mean it wasn’t worth a try. As Benjamin Franklin once said, “Perhaps the history of the errors of mankind, all things considered, is more valuable and interesting than that of their discoveries.” Of the many stamps he appeared on before and since, Franklin might like this one the best.

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(Editor’s Note – This is one of my favorite stamps for 2 reasons – it was issued about the time I started collecting stamps, and it is on the cover of my first stamp collecting guide published by Scott in 1973.)

## Wilkinsburg Stamp Club Information:

Meetings are on hold for the time being. Please check the website for information when we're permitted to safely gather again!

## WILKPEX – Our Annual Stamp Show

WILKPEX 2021 is scheduled for Saturday August 7 and Sunday August 8, 2021, at the Holiday Park Firehall in Plum. Admission is free. Anyone interested in exhibiting or setting up a dealer table is encouraged to contact one of the officers. More information will come as the date comes closer.

### Officers:

President:	Andy Novotny	( <a href="mailto:novoand@hotmail.com">novoand@hotmail.com</a> )
Vice President:	Laura Kaczynski	( <a href="mailto:laurakac13@verizon.net">laurakac13@verizon.net</a> )
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WSC, PO Box 10552, Pittsburgh PA 15235

### Newsletter:

Original articles for the newsletter can be submitted from any member to Maureen at a meeting or emailed to her (see above) or via regular mail:

Maureen McKeever, 118 Larchwood Drive, Turtle Creek PA 15145.

Club members will be mailed a black and white copy of the newsletter each month. Anyone can request a color copy to be delivered at a meeting, but please let Danielle know ahead of time.

