

BULLETIN of The Empire State Postal History Society

Volume 45 Number 2

September 2012

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Olean Stamp Club presents OLEPEX 2012 October 6 Hours: 10 – 4
Elks Club, 209 W. State St.**

For information: Ron Yeager cry@atlanticcbb.net or (814) 362-4471

**Leatherstocking & Tri-County Stamp, Coin & Postcard Show
Holiday Inn, 5206 State Hiway 23, Oneonta Hours: 10-4**

For information: Robert Finnegan (607) 432-8141 or rfinnegan@stny.rr.com

**STEPEX 2012, sponsored by the Elmira Stamp Club, October 19 & 20.
Big Flats American Legion Post, 45 South Olcott Rd (I-86, Exit 49) Big Flats, NY
Bourse, Exhibits, USPS, Show Cover. Hours 10 – 6 Friday; and 10 – 5 Saturday.
ESPHS Regional Meeting will be held Friday Oct 19 at 1 p.m.**

For information: Al Parsons (607) 732-0181 or alatholleyrd@aol.com

**Autumn Stamp Festival, organized by the Buffalo Stamp Club, November 17th.
VFW Leonard Post, 2450 Walden Avenue, Cheektowaga, NY Hours: 10 to 5
For information: George Gates (716) 633-8358 or gghg53@aol.com**

President's Message

Members who did not get to the Northeast Postal History Show in Albany in August missed a great chance to acquire some new material and gain some collecting knowledge. It was worth the trip. Unfortunately, we had a poor showing for our scheduled Board meeting. I was hoping to see some of our members who live on the eastern half of the state, but that did not happen.

I learned that our Treasurer, George DeKornfeld, expects to retire from his dentistry practice and will then leave New York State for Hawaii. George is willing to continue in the Treasurer's position long distance, but if anyone in state feels qualified and is willing to assume the duty, please contact me.

We have decided to resume publishing a Membership List to be distributed to our members with an up-coming edition of *Bulletin*. One important benefit of belonging to a society such as ours is the ability to contact other members who share our interest in the hobby and to be able to exchange information. The medium of e-mail has created an excellent way for this communication to happen, and the Membership List will accomplish it. Drew Nicholson has volunteered to put it together. If for some reason you do not wish to be included, or if we do not have your e-mail address, please notify George McGowan at geolotus2003@nycap.rr.com.

Our next Board meeting will be held at STEPEX in Big Flats on Saturday, Oct. 20 at 1 PM. I hope to see a number of you there!

David Przepiora

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 Mohawk: *vacant*
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Secretary's Membership Report**Admitted to Membership:**

W. Ron Pfeffer

Life Membership Payment Schedule:

At Ages 65 & Over \$200
At Ages 51 – 64 \$300

At Ages 40 – 50 \$350
At Ages 39 & Under \$400

ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF HUDSON RIVER MAIL

For the benefit and entertainment of attendees at the Albany Stamp Show the first weekend of August, Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris talked about the early history of postal service on the Hudson River, richly illustrated by PowerPoint slides. Their presentation, titled *Hudson River Steam Boat Mails: The Empire State's Rights*, drew on published scholarship, government records, and the contents of early letters that traveled up and down the river to portray the tie between commercial boat traffic on the Hudson and operations of the Colonial and post-Revolutionary mails. While I was unable to be at Albany to hear Diane and Bob's talk they were kind enough to send me the PowerPoint file on disc.

Here's my bird's eye view of the content: Before it had a federal government to worry about, the colony of New York staked out its control over commerce on the Hudson River and a mail system that followed the old Dutch route on the east bank of the river that was "federalized" in 1792. But conflict inevitably arose with Congress over interstate commerce and to a lesser extent with the U. S. Post Office once steam replaced sail on the river after 1807. The noteworthy postal history collection of W. L. L. Pelz and work on Hudson River Mail by Kenneth de Lisle was a centerpiece in this discussion, and images provided by George McGowan of "the Albany B" on several pieces illustrated a crucial adaptation of the government postal system to the way steam boats had revolutionized travel between Albany and New York City circa 1815. By 1822 it was apparent to the POD that substantial "losses of postages" could be traced to individuals carrying quantities of mail legally aboard the boats despite the fact that those same boats carried bagged mail under contract and collected loose letters while under way. An interesting section of the talk dealt with The Bridge Controversy. For some years Albany and Troy – 6 miles apart but on opposite sides of the river – had fought over the issue of bridging the Hudson at Albany (Albany's self-serving plan) or at Lansingburgh (the northerly end of navigable water, above Troy, Troy's self-serving plan, and the court's final decision). But to me one of the most interesting slides, below, shows the long term impact of early development of a robust mail route between New York and Albany. The slide is titled *The geographic flow of railroad mail 1895* and the width of each line relates to the tonnage of mail then being carried into the interior of the country. Just look at the New York Central Rail Road route from New York City to Albany to Chicago and westward:



Members: To "rent" the PowerPoint disc, contact me at rbramwell@nc.rr.com. Bob Bramwell

POSTAL HISTORY PASSION OF MY DAD, CHARLES SWEETING

By Heather Sweeting

In 1967 my father started a correspondence with ten to twenty fellow collectors and postal history enthusiasts. He had a lifelong love of history, and enjoyed searching out details of early post offices and stampless covers. A native of Cayuga County, he had embarked upon a search for letters and correspondence from each county post office and town listed in the microfilms found in the National Archives. Within the year, several of these postal history enthusiasts banded together to create a group they christened the Empire State Postal History Society. I still have the original membership list, hand written on index cards, as well as many of the early letters from dealers, collectors, and other folks eager to join the society.

His intent was to foster camaraderie amongst fellow collectors, learn from each other, trade materials, and conduct research to preserve and learn about the Post Offices and postal history within New York State. Among the early projects that the group undertook were listings of all the early New York State post offices by county, deciphering and listing manuscript markings on early covers in each county, listings of unusual cancels such as star/county/ postmaster cancels and of course developing an avid trading post/forum.

Dad was extremely proud that during his lifetime the group grew to over 200 members, published a large number of treatises, and amassed a treasury of over \$40,000. After suffering several heart attacks, and going through the transplant process and later rejection of his new heart, it was postal history that truly kept him alive. Having a postal history project, in this case the Cayuga county and Oswego county books to work on, became not only a passion but a project that kept his mind off his illness. His health left him unable to continue his other passion of restoring vintage cars. He truly enjoyed comparing, sharing and conversing with numerous collectors and historians, while working on these projects. The rides through the country to find the buildings that housed now defunct post offices, trips to stamp shows, and letters kept him going through many a day. When I was driving him to meetings and shows I was quickly being indoctrinated with knowledge and infected with the collecting bug.

After dad passed away, Alan Parsons spearheaded the drive to start the Sweeting multi-state postal history competition. Dad was never a truly avid exhibitor, yet he was passionate about research and disseminating information. I believe he enjoyed the thrill of the hunt more than the display and organization of creating an exhibit. I know that he would have loved the fact that a competition to encourage the preservation of postal history takes place in his honor. When he passed away he was happy to know that someone would continue to love his collection of postal history as much as he did and I am proud to see both the competition and the society he enjoyed so much continue with this legacy.

Perhaps someday when I retire, I will have time to create my own exhibits and enter them in the multi-state competition. In the mean time, I would urge all of you to enter your own research and exhibits into the upcoming competitive event in the hopes of encouraging the same sense of fun, camaraderie, research, and love of postal history the early Empire Staters enjoyed so much 45 years ago!

Heather Sweeting has been an officer and director of ESPHS longer than I have been a member so take her words about sharing your love of postal history to heart. Please.

TOWN OF NEWBURGH CONTRACT BRANCH HAS CLOSED

By Drew A. Nicholson

Tuesday, July 31st sounded the death knell of the Town of Newburgh contract Branch I wrote about in the June issue. According to an article that appeared in a local newspaper, patron Serafina Dabrowski remarked, “It’s like a death...It’s the end of another era.”¹

I concluded my previous article with a report of the possibility of a new round of negotiations. A meeting which included representatives of the U.S. Postal Service, the contract holder, and various individuals representing the Town of Newburgh, the local NYS Assemblyman, and U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey took place—but without success. According to Bonnie Carpenter, the manager and 18-year employee of the Branch, the U.S.P.S. refused to alter the new contract requirements. The official position of the USPS at the time of closing remained the same: “The[y] ordered the branch closed, saying [they] could not reach an agreement on a new contract.”

I spoke to Ms. Carpenter after the closing had taken place and she added a different perspective. She reported having a telephone conversation with the contract branch liaison in Denver, Co. During that call she was told that the underlying cause was postal union pressure to close the branch. Apparently the union position was that contract branches created competition for jobs. This perhaps can be seen in two subsequent actions taken by the Newburgh postmaster: “The Stewart [International airport] office is [just] within the Town and [is now] open from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Saturdays”; and the mailbox “located in the [Algonquin] Plaza parking lot will continue to accept mail *as long as the volume warrants it.*” *[emphasis added]* It would seem to me that both actions would either add time to established USPS employees’ jobs or add a part-time job or two, both effects beneficial to union members.

In any case, the residents of the Town of Newburgh now must visit the branch office on Liberty St. and Broadway in the inner City *[in a suspect neighborhood, I might add]*, or the previously mentioned branch at Stewart Airport (Enterprise Drive). Neither of the actions taken in response to the closing “is...likely to appease branch patrons.” “You guys are going to be missed; that’s for sure,” stated patron Bob Johnston.

1. Michael Randall, “Post office closure lamented,” *Times Herald Record*, Wednesday, Aug. 1, 2012, p. 3. All quotes are drawn from this article.

NEWS ABOUT ESPHS POSTAL HISTORY AUCTIONS

Thanks to an array of interesting pieces of New York State postal history from an expanding group of consignors, bidders in our recently completed Auction #4 had a good time competing for their favorite pieces. Seven consignors will receive checks shortly, once our Treasurer has collected from winning bidders. Our policy in these auctions is that all proceeds from auction sales go to consignors, and that winning bidders pay as little as a dollar in postage and materials.

Starting with Auction #5, a few covers and post cards donated from the estate of John Nunes will be included in each future auction. Proceeds of those items will be added to the treasury of the Society because they remained after returning material from John’s Auction #123, which was incomplete at the time of his death.