

APS UNIT 28

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EMPIRE STATE
POSTAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

POSTER STAMPS PROMOTED DRAMA FESTIVAL

By Bob Bramwell

Before the advent of flash mobs, B organizations publicized their activities by means of print: billboards, posters, and newspaper ads. Philately was used as well because of the long history of advertising on envelopes and the issuance of postage stamps coordinated with events of national importance, starting with the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

The Schenectady Chamber of Commerce and Union College Drama club got into the act with a poster stamp promotion for the 1936 festival highlighting Margaret Anglin in the role of Mrs. Malaprop in Richard Sheridan's 1775 comedy, *The Rivals*.

This intact booklet of six rouletted panes of four stamps per page clearly illustrates the importance given to the then-simple act of letter writing in the days before email.

EDITOR'S NOTES

The Chamber of Commerce was active in many philatelic promotions, often in association with the Schenectady Stamp Club. The Union College festival was established in 1934 by Charles Coburn and his first wife, actress Ivah Wills, who died a year after the 1936 festival. The Coburns supervised, directed, and acted in some of the productions. The six 1936 productions included Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*. Other playwrights represented included poet Edgar Lee Masters and George Ade.

After Ivah's death, Coburn — a rotund character with a monocle — began a 22-year Hollywood film career at age 60. ■

