

The Stamp Market - Friend or Foe?
by L. Steve Edmondson

Linn's Stamp News has just recently published its Stamp Market Index for 1996. Over the past year, according to this index, the price of 19th Century United States stamps has risen 14.45%. The same index for 20th Century United States stamps has risen 5.2%, while the index for United States Airmails is up 3.29%.

At first blush these figures seem encouraging. But on closer study, they contain much food for thought. The wide disparity between the increase for 19th century material (almost 15%) and the increases in the other two indices, both of which track 20th century material (up about 5% and 3% respectively) is troublesome. This clearly indicates the hobby has become decidedly two-tiered. At one extreme (dare I say the upper end), the (mostly older) affluent collectors are avidly chasing premium quality classic U.S. philately, while the other group (dare I say the lower end) composed of (the younger or) less affluent collectors are maintaining a market that barely covers the increase in inflation. This is NOT good! And I choose these words carefully, because these figures don't spell bad news for the hobby, they're just not the good news. They need to be interpreted as yet another wake-up call to those influential within U.S. philately. We have to take steps now to insure that the new collectors join our ranks.

Another, perhaps more disturbing interpretation of these figures, is that the investment crowd is driving up the price of classic material in another BOOM like the hobby experienced in the late 1970's. If this is true, and I emphasize
(continued on page 6)

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Well, it's fall and winter is just around the corner. Many changes have taken place in the club this summer. As always some have been good and others haven't. The stamp show was a great success, and the club has gained 13 new members. But we have lost several who will be greatly missed. John Campbell was always at the meetings with used stamps and a greeting for everyone. Glen Moss was always ready with an idea or a bit of knowledge. Terry Chaney was worked hard to keep things going and make sure everything was in order. Woodrow Dawson was there with Betsy with a handshake for everyone. These people will be sorely missed, but their spirits will be with us.

Matt Benward, President NPS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
The Stamp Market-Friend or Foe	1
The President's Corner	1
Nashville Stamp News	2
Club Info	2
A Philatelic Look at the U.S.S. WISCONSON	3-5
The Stamp Market	cont. 6

* NASHVILLE STAMP NEWS *

NEW TRAILER

Using the profit from our stamp show this year we have purchased a trailer to hold our frames. Dave Bodkin volunteered and found a trailer for a reasonable price. Several members went to inspected it and found it to be perfect. Two weeks later Web Rizor, Tom Tribke, and I went and picked it up. Using Web's truck we pulled to Glen Moss' house, moved the old frames into their new home, and parked it in Glen's back yard. Thanks to all the members who helped !!!

Nashville Stamp Show '97

This year's show was a success as usual with the help of our members. Everyone arrived at 4:00 pm and started right to work. When the new frame arrived they were drug in and up within an hour! Several members cleaned the plexiglass while others put in the exhibits. Soon dealers started to arrive most of whom I knew about. Soon they found their tables and started to set up. By 7 we were done. The rest of the show went on like clockwork. About 400 people attended. Thanks to everyone helped !!!

New Members

Rudy Caduff	C. Don Ladd
Eric Jamborsky	David Tucker
Robert Doochin	Richard McKee
Bruce Oppenhimer	Hector Ramirez
Richina Parnell	Kelly Gowen
Lynda Morrison	Bill Crane
Bill Vance	

The Volunteer State
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Meetings: Second and Fourth Mondays of each month. Buy and swap at 5:30 p.m., Business meeting a 6:45 p.m., and Program at 7:00 p.m.

Meetings are held at the Inglewood Branch Library, 4312 Gallatin Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37216.

Kids under 17 get a FREE stamp packet at their first attendance. Ages 6 and up are WELCOME!

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the IF, then it is decidedly BAD. For as sure as there's a boom, it will be followed by a BUST. That is what happened in the early 1980's and the hobby was devastated for well over a decade. In large measure because of the financial shenanigans, the public shied away from the hobby and for the past twenty years new collectors have not replace all those who have departed. The result is called, "The aging of philately." And there is no question it happened. The average age of the stamp collector has gotten older - and older. Obviously, if the trend continues, the last stamp collector will be asked to "turn out the lights." But well before this happens some other milestones will be passed: dealers will close up shop because they can't make enough money to pay overhead and continue in business. The hobby press first will shrink and then disappear. Stamp clubs and organizations will loose membership and ultimately stop functioning. Will all of this come to pass - probably not!

Dealers have closed up their small "mom & pop" shops - but this isn't unique to our hobby - the trend away from locally owned, small operations is economy wide. In place of the local dealer, we now have an active network of show dealers. A month doesn't go by without there being at least one bourse or club shop in the Portland, OR - Vancouver, BC corridor - and on many weekends there's more than one. Auctions remain active and prices for all philatelic material remains firm.

The hobby press has experienced some shrinkage. Again, the demise of the small, specialty newspapers is not unique to philately. More importantly, the largest of our periodicals, Linn's, hasn't lost ground; and the second largest, Stamp Collector, just this year was acquired by a "hobby conglomerate" and its subscription figures are firm, albeit slightly down. And the two papers at the bottom of the subscriber list merged. If this sounds like business news from the other sectors of the American economy, well it is! Consolidation has been the dominant feature of our business system for the past twenty years. Different, sure! Disastrous, no!

Stamp clubs and other hobby organizations have also gone through a period of belt tightening. The APS for example lost membership (not drastically but noticeably). Now, it is holding its own, possibly even gaining membership. Most of the other specialty organizations to which I belong have the same track record; and the same thing can be said for our own club. Our older members go, but new ones come in - maybe not quite in the numbers that would make us happy, but enough to see that the wolf is not at the door.

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