



# The Overprint

Newsletter of the Reading Stamp Collectors' Club

Stan Raugh, Editor  
4217 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Temple, PA 19560-1805  
Tele: 610-921-6822

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**Most Meetings Held the first Tuesday of Every Month at 7:00 p.m.  
Meeting Site: Berkshire Commons, 5485 Perkiomen Avenue (Route 422)  
Turn North on Lincoln opposite of the Dairy Queen.  
Proceed 300 feet, turn left on Washington and look right of center at the stop sign.**

**Tuesday, July 3, 2012, at 7:00 p.m.**

**Member and Dealer Bob Steiniger will present:**

**“How to Organize a Country Collection by Topic”**

**In modern philately, more and more collecting is being done by topic  
and Bob will give an example of arranging the stamps of a nation in this fashion.**

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## **August Picnic Meeting**

Our August meeting will be a picnic meeting at St. John's Lutheran Church in Boyertown.

**NOTE:** This meeting will be **MONDAY**, August 6<sup>th</sup> and will begin at 6:00 p.m. This is a change from our normal day and time.

The meeting will feature a combined auction with the Pottstown Club and will be a great opportunity to offer stamps to a new audience.

## ***What to bring to the Picnic-***

First of all, bring food! There will be a sign-up sheet at the next meeting, but if you are able to attend the picnic--but not the next meeting--call Barbara Brown at 610-469-2758.

The ladies usually have games and everyone, even you guys, can bring a suitable prize. Fellows, this mean gifts women would like! Leave the extra jumper cables, old weed eaters and screwdriver sets at home!

## *Where is it now—The Fiji Mermaid*

by Stan Raugh

Sea monsters and other unknown animals have tickled the imagination of sailors for many centuries.

Part of it is the fear of the sea. Particularly in times past, sailing the seas was a dangerous endeavor.

When I read about how many ships sank in the 1600 and 1700 hundreds I wonder who was dumb enough to invest in such a risky enterprise as running a ship line. It must have been even scarier to set sail in the ancient world.

Mermaids might have provided a gentler image to a fearful sailor and a few naturally occurring fish and animals could look enough like a mermaid to encourage such rumors.

In 1842, P. T. Barnum gave the world proof of the existence these exotic creatures when he exhibited The Fiji Mermaid.

Of course, there we doubters. One man who saw the mermaid in Barnum's Museum claimed it was a fake. Barnum responded in disgust, pronouncing that there was no limit to some folk's ignorance.

The mermaid is thought to have been made by sewing together the head and torso of a juvenile monkey with the back end of a fish. Paper mache was then cosmetically applied.

Barnum was an interesting man. He claimed during his life to have never said the line about a sucker being born every minute, but he did enjoy tricking people, something that was part of 19<sup>th</sup> Century folk humor.

He was so enthusiastically anti-slavery that the Confederacy targeted his New York museum as a site for a terrorist

attack.

Barnum also kicked alcohol and would spend hours talking to drunk strangers to help them get sober.

Unlike other objects I have in this series, we do know where the Fiji Mermaid is. It was destroyed in 1865 in a fire at the museum.

Or, was it? There are several museums and side shows that claim to own the original Fiji Mermaid. Joe Nickell, a professional skeptic, dismisses all these claims. But could he be wrong? There is also a rumor that the Mermaid is in the attic of Harvard's Peabody Museum.

Where ever the original Mermaid is, these half women, half fish do exist. On stamps, that is. Sounds like a good topic to collect. No charge for the suggestion of a potential award-winning exhibit.

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### *And the winner is...*

At the June meeting, Richard Jay Ross won the 50/50 drawing of \$23.00. Congratulations.

The attendance drawing was \$15.00 and Rod Reeder was the winner. Rod is a plate block collector. Your editor likes position pieces including plate blocks and is always glad when a fellow enthusiast wins!

### Member Ads:

Don't forget, we are glad to print short want ads for members. We have several dealer members who receive this newsletter.