

PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF LANCASTER COUNTY
POST OFFICE BOX 982
LANCASTER, PA 17603

MEETINGS - 2nd Wednesday of each month
STAUFFER MANSION at 7:30 P.M.
1241 Lititz Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601
Next Meeting-Wednesday, MARCH 11, 1992

For information about our organization
call Marilyn Shirley at (717) 872-2479
or Michael Shirley at (717) 394-0186

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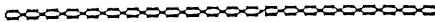
March 1992

ATTENTION EXHIBITORS

Have you returned your "Prospectus" to Lucy Eyster for listing the title of your exhibit for the LANCOPEX show? A show is as good as its exhibitions. WE NEED YOUR ENTRANCE IN THE SHOW.

Do not be intimidated by superior exhibits. The simple exhibits are the ones that draw the interest of "future" stamp collectors. These are most important to a well-rounded show.

Therefore, if you feel an inadequacy to exhibit, please reconsider your decision. As they say, "variety is the spice of life"; so let's make our show a little "picy" this year. It's lots of fun, also.



Sixteen people attended the February meeting of the LCPS. The stamp show was discussed at length. Members signed up to be listed on the "Patron's List" of the LANCOPEX Program. The cost of being a patron is \$5.00.

Lesley Botte visited the York Stamp Show and shared some of the interesting areas of the show with the club. She mentioned a non-competative exhibit of "humorous" postal exhibits, i.e., balloon mail -- a stamp on a balloon. Lesley suggested we might consider an area of humorous interest for this year's show. Anyone having any ideas for this exhibit, please bring them to the meeting so they can be incorporated in the show.

The club was saddened over the death of Mr. Robert Goodell, January 29, 1991. He was our only CHARTER MEMBER of the L.C.P.S. Our sympathies are extended to his wife, Jane.

The "show and tell" program on the love theme was very enlightening. There was a great variety of items brought in from post cards, valentines, love stamps from Ireland, Europa stamps, and just stamps in general that you "loved" the most.

Charles Kilgore treated the club to delicious brownies. They were so good, we all became chocolate-holics. Thanks so much!



REFRESHMENT HOST AND HOSTESS FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH IS TRUYDE AND BILL GREINER.

M A R C H P R O G R A M

Lesley Botte will be in charge of the March Program. The theme will be "STAMP GAMES". This should be a very interesting evening for everyone. Get your "thinking cap" in place and your wits sharpened for a night of intrigue and fun!!

P I L G R I M A G E T O M E C C A T H R O U G H S T A M P S

The following article on the Middle East by David Thompson is in essence a fascinating look at the Development of Religion in that area of the world incidentally illustrated by the depiction on stamps of the pilgrimage to Mecca and the relationship of their religious practices with the Holy Bible of the Jews and Christians.

Few aspects of our hobby are so well-served by modern Middle Eastern stamps as Topical collecting. Scarce are the philatelic preoccupations which have not been tackled, and from the seemingly interminable animal stamps which once flooded from the Gulf States, to sights and scenes of more specific local import, mosques and minarets ... oil production ... camels ... it is a very narrow topic which cannot include at least one Middle Eastern contribution.

The Gulf Conflict, at which we looked almost one year ago, is one example of a specialization which can be adapted to the topical collection, and we will return such themes in the future. This month, however, I intend to look at the way philately can help us to understand the nature, and the beliefs, of the people of the region, as we join our hobby on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Mecca fell to Islam in the eighth year of the Hejirah (630 AD, an event commemorated on Iran Scott 2160); the pilgrimage, however, dates back many centuries before that. The Meccans at the time of Mohammed's birth, in 569 AD, claimed descent from Abraham, and tradition claimed that their temple, the Holy Ka'bah, had been built by Abraham for the worship of the One God. But the House of Allah was a nest of idolatry, crammed with images whom the Meccans themselves described as the Daughters of Allah. It was to worship these that the first pilgrims came.

Opponents of these beliefs, the Hunafa (literally, Those Who Turn Away), yearned for a return to the true religion of Abraham, and it was to these that the young Mohammed inclined.

Every year during Ramadan, the month of heat, he would retire to Hira, a desert hill outside the city, and it was here that he received the first of the revelations, from the Archangel Gabriel, which were ultimately to be collected as Al-Quar'an, "The Lecture".

For some three years Mohammed preached only to his immediate family and friends. But at the end of that period, he received the command to "Arise and warn", and slowly, his preaching spread throughout Mecca.

Boycotted and persecuted by the idolators, Mohammed and his followers were eventually confined to their base in one of the gorges which runs down to Mecca. The document ordering their estrangement, drawn up by the city elders, was deposited in the Holy Ka'bah.

But when, after three years, it was removed, it was found that white ants had devoured or destroyed every word on the page bar two - Bismika Allahumma, or In Thy Name, O Allah. The boycott was immediately lifted and Mohammed and his followers were allowed to return to the city.

Opposition to the Prophet had grown, however, and as the plots against his life thickened, Mohammed and his followers finally decided to flee. Gradually and unobtrusively, the Muslims sold their private property and slipped out of the city, bound for Yathrib (Medina), 200 miles away. On June 20th, 622 AD, the night Mohammed's opponents had appointed for his murder, Mohammed, his first cousin Ali, and a friend, Abu Bakr, joined their companions.

From Yathrib, the Prophet's power and influence grew, until finally he was able to lead an army of 10,000 men into Mecca as conqueror. The idols were destroyed and for the first time, the Muslim call to prayer rang out over Mecca.

Pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam (the others are belief in the One God, charity prayer, and fasting during

(Ramadan), and remains the most significant visible sign of Islam's vitality. The pilgrims arrive from every corner of the Muslim world, by every conceivable form of transport: Berbers and Kurds from the High Atlas and remote Zagros; peasants from the rice fields of Bangladesh and coconut groves of Indonesia; oil rich Sheiks from the Emirates - a seething mass of men and women, of every calling and color, coming together in a sea of white (uniform of the pilgrim).

It is a time to celebrate faith and ardor, love and devotion; also a time for friendship, new or renewed. Many business deals are struck, many contacts made during the pilgrimage. Many marriages are arranged as the law demands that women attend the Haj unveiled.

The pilgrimage itself, then, is as old as Islam. But it is only during the past decade or so that its celebration has come to philatelic attention.

The traditional imagery of these stamps, displayed throughout the Islamic world, is the Holy Ka'bah and, in particular, the Black Rock set in the eastern corner of the cube-shaped shrine. Believed by many to be a meteorite, the rock is most familiar to stamp collectors from the series of definitives (Scott 691-711) issued by Saudi Arabia between 1976-79. But it has also appeared, whether as the dominant image or a simple inset, on the stamps of almost every Islamic nation from Bangladesh (154) to Morocco (470-471).

The ceremonies of the Haj reach their culmination on the afternoon of the fourth day, when the pilgrims make their way to the small rocky hill of Arafat, in the valley of Mina. Here they pray, meditate, read Al-Quran, and listen to sermons, and all around the cry can be heard Labbalk, Allahuma Labbalk - "Here I am O Allah, here I am". This scene, too, has become familiar to collectors - Bangladesh 155; Iraq 895-96; Kuwait 764; Oman 190; and others pict views of Arafat.

The other rituals of the Haj can also be collected. Oman issued a six strong set (302 a-f) which included several of these, although strangely, they ignored the order in which they take place.

First is the tawaf (302a). Having entered the mosque through the Gate of Banu Shayba, the pilgrim kisses the Black Rock, and then circles the Holy Ka'bah seven times, three times quickly, the remainder at a walking pace, kissing the Rock on each circuit and repeating, Allahu Akbar - God is great.

The gathering of stones at Al Muzdalifah (302d) follows the gathering of the plains of Arafat; then comes the stoning of the jamra (stone heaps) at Mina (302c) - an act recalling Abraham's stoning of Satan, which can also be seen on Saudi Arabia 867-68. Eid Ul-adha, the Feast of Sacrifices, celebrated on Iran 2164, ends the pilgrimage.

Although it is the religious aspect of the Haj which draws the pilgrims, scenes from the lives of those pilgrims will also interest the collector.

Several of the routes they take may be illustrated by Saudi Arabia 350-53 depicting the highway from Tayif to Mecca, opened in mid-1965; 939-40 commemorate the October 11, 1984, opening of the Mecca to Medina Highway, the link today between the two holiest cities of Islam.

Iraq (634-5) offers the pilgrim caravans winding their way to the Holy City; and from Oman we are shown the village which springs up every Haj outside Jeddah Airport (302f), and the tent city in the valley of Mina (302b). Finally, Saudi issue (500-02) depicts the New Arcade of the Grand Mosque, itself adopted as a resting place by many pilgrims.

Even today, many quite anachronistic falsehoods are attached to these makeshift villages. Quarantine camps, a good water supply and the aerial spraying of disinfectants have long since vanquished the epidemic which once spread like wildfire across the 50 square miles in which so many people are quartered.

But Mecca has not been without its share of modern tragedies. On July 31st, 1987, a demonstration was called by the Ayatollah Khomeini to "defend divine standards and the interests of Muslims" against "the pagan and apostates of world arrogance".

The Saudi government, having already issued their guarded approval for the proposed marches and speeches, set aside three hours for the demonstration. The police, having closed off all the exits, opened fire after two. In the ensuing slaughter, 407 pilgrims were killed, 649 more - including Khomeini's wife, Batoul - were injured. Iran remembered the victims with a Scott-unlisted stamp issued in 1988. The tragedy seared, then severed, Iranian relations with Saudi Arabia for the next five years.

From exultation to tragedy, the nature of the Haj encapsulates all emotions. To recapture even a fragment of that nature on a simple postage stamp is impossible; to convey it to a non-participant doubly so.

But still its power can be felt. The Haj is the greatest multinational gathering in the modern world. The UN represents more nations, but it involves less people. The Humbh Mela in India involves more people, but it represents less nations. Nowhere else on earth do close to two millions souls, from more than 70 countries, descent upon one place, at one time, to celebrate their life and their love. The images of such a gathering deserve a place in every one's collection.

-- Global Stamp News, July 1991

PATRON'S LIST

We are hoping the Patron's List will be growing, and growing, and growing! Only you can make this happen. To be on the Patron's List all you need to do is send in your \$5.00 to Lucy Eyster, 1839 Rockford Lane, Lancaster, PA 17601. Be sure to note exactly how you want your name to appear on the listing. We are hoping for a 100% participation of members (plus any other friends you may wish to honor).

The patron's list helps defray the cost of the LANCOPEX Stamp Show. Some clubs charge admission to these shows -- we do not!

ROBERT GOODELL MEMORIAL

The club unanimously approved the suggestion to send \$50.00 to the AMERICAN PHILATELIC SOCIETY (APS) in honor of our charter member, Robert Goodell, to be used for their library fund.

Mr. Goodell was a lively, quick-witted, humorous gentleman. He was an avid collector of postal history. This included an 11-volume set on Lancaster County alone. A living link to Lancaster's history was forged in Robert Goodell's lifetime.

We of the Lancaster County Philatelic Society are most honored to have known and associated with Mr. Robert Goodell.

