

In Memorium

From Dick Colberg: We note in the August issue of the *American Philatelist* that a long-time friend of LEBPEX, **Kimber Wald**, has died from COVID-19. Kim was a loyal supporter of all things LEBPEX; he could always be counted on for an exhibit or two, and he was a judge of our show several times. Kim lived in Woodbine, Maryland.

August, 2020 marks six months since we have been able to meet together at the library. Your editor is cautiously optimistic that the situation will continue to get better for us all, and we won't need to mark an anniversary of being apart in six more months (currently, I am still a bit more cautious than I am optimistic).

At the second virtual meeting in July of the PSLC, it was announced that the annual December banquet for 2020 is cancelled, and the club will continue to hold virtual meetings via ZOOM twice a month for the rest of the year – with the exception of the first meeting in August, which is the annual picnic, held outdoors at the municipal park in Millersville.

For any LSCC member who does not attend the virtual PSLC meetings but would like to see what they are all about, the invitation to do so is always open; email me (stnst2@aol.com) and I will make

sure you get the meeting link that is sent to PSLC members. There is no obligation to talk or even turn your camera on, but I can assure you the feature presentations are of good quality, and the show and tell period after the presentations is an informative, fun, and interactive affair.

Obviously, at some point, we'd like to meet together again as a club. Is there any interest in trying to hold a virtual meeting of the LSCC? I realize that we all have varying technical capabilities, so I'm not sure that would be a realistic option for our small group. However, I wanted to put the proposal out there. I'd be willing to learn more about the Zoom platform and host a meeting if we'd like to give it a shot. Otherwise, please join us sometime for a PSLC meeting.

If anyone has any other ideas about when or how we might go about meeting again, just let Dick Colberg or myself know. (SN)

Our spot on the PSLC website, updated

PSLC webmaster Charles DiComo has updated all of the affiliate pages. You can see our spot using the link below. You will notice, a scan of the old LEBPEX medal continues to serve as a logo. Is there anyone among us, who is good with a pencil or pen who would like to take a

stab at drawing one for us? We didn't really discuss our options before we were prevented from meeting, but I think we can just take what we have with the medal and run with it.

<https://lcps-stamps.org/newsletter-archive/lebanon-stamp-collectors-club/>

Sugar in the morning, sugar in the evening . . .

Sugar at suppertime! Many of you were probably able to finish that line from a #1 hit for the McGuire Sisters in 1958. My grandmother used to sing the chorus of that song to us when we were children. A decade and a half before this song became a hit, it wouldn't have been possible for most Americans to have that much sugar. If you remember the song, then chances are you can tell us why that was – wartime rationing.

Sugar was one of the first commodities to be rationed, and it was the last one to have restrictions lifted. In fact, War Ration Book One, issued to every man, woman, and child in the country in early May, 1942, was popularly known as “the sugar book”. When you find one of these today, you rarely find any of the sugar stamps left inside of it. When War Ration Book Four was issued in 1943, the sugar book became obsolete, and consumers found their sugar coupons in there (here again, most copies of Book Four you will find will not have a single sugar

stamp left in them that was validated for use).

There are many different types of rationing items to collect – related to tires, shoes, meat, and processed foods, just to name a few of the items that were rationed – and I think most of us who collect rationing items collect them all. I think sugar is a great area to focus on for someone who wants to begin a collection, just because of the role it continues to have in our popular culture. Sugar also provides a nice overview of the items that are available to collect – books, stamps, coupons, applications, letters, you name it. Everyone had their personal ration book, but allowances had to be made for household canning, commercial and institutional uses, and other sugar needs above and beyond the standard personal ration allotment. Mr. Hershey needed lots of it to continue to make his chocolate with non-rationed Derry Township milk. An understanding of how and why sugar was rationed gives one an overview of how our parents and grandparents had to economize during the lean years of the war effort.

Sugar was rationed shortly after tires; both items relied heavily on foreign sources that were severely disrupted or no longer available due to the fact that the areas of production and/or the shipping routes that had

brought those materials to us had fallen under control of the Axis powers. That left the government little choice but to ration certain items, to fulfill our military needs, ensure fairness among consumers, and ultimately, to prevent shortages. Not only were rubber and sugar essential to the war effort at home and abroad, there was also the newfound purchasing power that the war production economy brought to everyone who had just lived through the Great Depression. This naturally increased consumer demand for many different items, and domestically produced meats and processed foods followed gasoline and automobiles in the ration parade shortly thereafter.

For the collector, there is plenty of material to collect. When I began exploring the topic, I relied on pictures of the items in the Duke University collection, which are readily available online at <https://archives.lib.duke.edu/catalog/wwiirationcoupons>. The University of Delaware has images that you can use to print out your very own ration books (<https://www.history.udel.edu/about/history-media-center/wwii-ration-books>). Authentic, used ration books are plentiful; millions were issued, tens if not hundreds of thousands have survived, and I satisfied my appetite for those rather quickly.

I have been able to acquire a few “family groups” of books and documents that provide a snapshot of the times. For example, I bought a group of rationing documents which once belonged to a couple who owned a coffee shop in DeQueen, Arkansas; their personal books are unusually full – especially the sugar book. As owners of a coffee shop, they apparently didn’t need to use many of the sugar stamps in Book One, or the higher numbered stamps, which were used once coffee became rationed. While many of the sugar stamps remain with those books, the first four stamps in each book were removed, because when Book One was issued, a few stamps would be removed by the registrar, based on how much sugar a household declared that they had on hand. Also included was paperwork that they needed to file with the Office of Price Administration (OPA) about their commercial needs, and certificates issued by their local rationing board for the sugar and coffee that they needed at their coffee shop. As a group, the items have historical value, and provide intimate details of a small business and its owners during the early years of the war that would have otherwise been lost to time.

Here are a few of the common characteristics I have found which pertain to the condition of the four

different books, which might help you when starting your collection:

Book One will usually be found with two stamps (numbers 19 and 20), which were the ones that were never validated for use, or none at all. If you do find any valid stamps still attached, they will most likely be higher numbered stamps, which were used for coffee or shoes.

Book Two, which was issued upon the rationing of Meats, Fish, Fats, and Cheeses (red stamps) and processed foods (blue stamps), will usually be found empty; this was the only book issued in which every single stamp it contained was validated for the purchase of consumer goods. For most people, these stamps represented a large share of their basic nutritional needs, and you'll be lucky to find a few stamps of either color left in any of them.

Book Three was issued with brown stamps, and stamps with images of artillery guns, tanks, aircraft carriers, and airplanes. These books will almost always be found with no brown stamps, and all but the first row of airplane stamps still intact within the book. The first row of airplane stamps entitled the bearer to a new pair of shoes, and were good until shoe rationing ended late in 1945, so if you ever manage to find a book with all of the airplanes in it, it's a keeper. The rest of the war

machinery stamps were never used for anything, which is why they are so commonly found. As with the red and blue stamps in Book Two, you're lucky if you find some brown stamps with your book, because they were required to purchase meat once the red stamps in Book Two ran out. I once took a chance on a family group of books, as one photo of a Book Three looked like it had a good number of brown stamps remaining. As it turned out, this family was issued two copies of Book Three! This was against the regulations – but the family members who had been issued two books didn't use any of the meat stamps in their duplicate book. They did, however, remove the airplane stamps which were good for a pair of shoes. Consumers were generally forbidden from detaching stamps from their books if they weren't in the presence of the merchants they were purchasing from, but one of the few exceptions to this rule was the ability to remove a stamp to buy a pair of shoes from a mail order catalog.

Book Four is usually found with many stamps still in it; once you learn more about rationing, you'll understand which ones were used for sugar and other commodities, and which ones were never validated. The ones that remain are usually the ones that were never valid, and this

includes a whole row of coffee stamps that were issued with the book but not used (fortunately for Edgar Bergen, Charlie McCarthy, and their radio sponsor, Chase and Sanborn, coffee rationing ended about the time the coffee stamps in Book One ran out).

Book Five was produced, but never issued, as the war ended before it was needed. I only mention this because if you happen to find one of those in the antiques marketplace, you have found a rare item!

Sugar rationing remained in effect until November 1947, and someone like my grandmother, who could do everything in her kitchen from baking cookies and cakes to canning fruit as well as any professional chef out there, had to make due with less until then. She might have gotten a little bit more sugar to work with for that final year of rationing when my dad was born in the fall of 1946 (everyone, including newborns, was entitled to a ration book, and I bought a set of books on eBay from a 75 year-old man who was about a month old when his Book Four was issued). The only rationing memorabilia I ever found that was left over from my grandparents were a few red OPA tokens, given as change for meat coupons used from Book Four. But the frugality that they carried with them as a virtue throughout their lives was no doubt

ingrained in them when they were young adults during the Great Depression, and tempered by the sacrifices that they made with the rest of their countrymen and women during the war that brought them out of it. It became a defining characteristic of their personalities that they didn't feel the need to compromise on, even in the period of relative prosperity that the nation enjoyed throughout the rest of their working years.

If you're interested in rationing, you need to check out the SRTC, Society of Ration Token Collectors. It took me a while to find them, but I finally did – on eBay, of all places. Their president, a very affable gentleman named Don, has the society's electronic catalog listed on there (it's well over 1700 pages, and includes a section on Canada too). The PDF disk and a year's paid membership in the SRTC can be yours for one low price of \$24. And if, after reading all of this, you're still wondering . . . Yes! Ration collecting does rest comfortably within the friendly confines of philately. The SRTC is an affiliate of the APS, and there was an article about collecting ration books in the *American Philatelist* of October, 2015.

I encourage you to pay our elders a small tribute, and add a few

rationing items from their world, with pride, to your collection. (SN)

The Finest Collection of a Rare Stamp

A few months ago I wrote about my favorite stamp, the Win the War Stamp of 1942. Billions of these were produced, and I have a small horde of several thousand, so they might be worth more as embellishments to people who are into scrapbooking their family history than they are to stamp collectors. My “second favorite” stamp is one I can safely say I will never own a valuable copy of, but thanks to the discipline and determination of one philatelist, I own a virtual album full of them.

I am talking about “The United States Five Cent Stamp of 1856”, Richard C. Frajola and Frederick R. Mayer’s documentation of Mayer’s stupendous collection, published by the Collector’s Club in 2005. While there is nothing quite like owning an example of the real thing, the simple fact is that there will never be a finer collection of this stamp assembled. If you love this stamp, you should have this book, which is still available for purchase.

Before I had this book, I had a copy of the auction catalog for Frederick R. Mayer’s sale, administered by Matthew Bennett International, which took place on October 21, 2005. The catalog

frequently referenced the book, which was published preceding the auction, for many of the lots. While the catalog contained many of the illustrations contained in the book, and was found online for less than I paid for the book, the book is well worth the extra money you might need to spend for it (also, you’ll probably have a much easier time finding the book). The catalog is well organized, but it’s organized like, well, a catalog. The book is a much easier read, and as you would fully expect, has a lot more detail to it than the catalog. Even if you are like me, and love this stamp for its pleasing appearance, you’ll likely get tired of turning the pages of the catalog after you’ve seen several dozen images of the same stamp. The book, on the other hand, is a page turner, even if your interest in the postal history of the subject is relatively minimal.

While I believe that I will never own a valuable example, I was lucky enough to find a “cut to shape” copy of this stamp, along with a 10-cent green Washington, from a seller in France for pennies on its Scott catalog value. I imagine that these stamps might have crossed the Atlantic in tandem to cover postage on a cover that was lost to history many, many years ago. (SN)