

# CALGARY PHILATELIST

February 1998

Issue #28



## We're back at our post.

Dear customer, as you know, Canada Post has not been able to deliver your mail recently. However, we're now back at work, ready to serve you, and our first priority is to bring things up to speed as quickly as possible.

Rest assured, we're working hard to get your letters, cards and parcels to their destinations on time.

All the best for the holiday season.



Visit our Web Site at: [www.mailposte.ca](http://www.mailposte.ca)

The 16-day postal strike of 1997 has generated a number of postal history items for the philatelist. This postcard of apology (French version on the reverse) was put in box numbers at the Calgary main post office a few days after the strike ended.



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The CPS was founded in April 1922 by Dr. Edward George Mason. It is Chapter 66 of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada, Chapter 1360 of the American Philatelic Society, and Chapter 91 of the American Topical Association.

The CPS address is Box 1478, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2L6, or the Web at: <http://www.agt.net/public/tpresber/CPS.HTM>

Articles or advertisements for the Calgary Philatelist should be sent to the Editor, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. Small ads are free to paidup members of the CPS. Display ads are \$10 per full page per issue for camera-ready copy (photographs extra charge). No partial-page ads accepted.

Membership dues for the 1997-98 season are \$12, plus an initiation fee of \$5 for new members. Mail to CPS, Membership Chairman, Box 1478, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2L6.

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#### NOTES TOWARD A HISTORY OF ARTISTAMPS by John Held Jr

The first exhibition of artistamps occurred in 1974, when James Warren Felter first identified the field in a show at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C., subsequently travelling to additional sites in Geneva, Switzerland, and around the United States and Canada. During the following decade, another Canadian, the late Michael Bidner, coined the word 'artistamps', to signify artist-produced postage stamps, most of which were being produced within the mail art genre.

There have been several attempts to define artistamps. Some say that artistamps must be perforated, be of a certain size, produced in multiples (as opposed to original works), or be gummed. But these definitions only tend to limit the field, in which the history of this new medium is being written on an almost daily basis.

During 1996 at the Stamp Art Gallery in San Francisco, Picasso Gaglione and I curated artistamps shows on Yves Klein, Robert Watts, Donald Evans, Harley, E.F. Higgins III, Patricia Tavenner, Carl Chew, May Wilson, Bugpost, Dogfish, and others. Work on these shows, and additional research are uncovering a wealth of new information.

From a recent book, NEW YORK DADA, 1915-23, by Frances M. Naumann, comes the anecdote concerning a suitor of Duchamp, the Baroness Elsa van Freytag-Loringhoven, who has been described as "the first American dada ... she is the only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada." (reference 1). She roamed the streets of Greenwich Village from 1918 to 1923 attired in what she called "fanciful artistic clothes". She adorned herself with black lipstick, a birdcage around her neck with a live canary, and was occasionally seen with her shaved head painted purple (to combat ringworm). To the bustle of her dress she attached "an electric battery tail light", and when people inquired why, she answered that "Cars and bicycles have tail lights. Why not I? Also people won't bump into me in the dark." The Baroness had one other eccentricity that earns her a place in the Pantheon of Artistamps, for she stuck postage stamps on her cheeks in lieu of blush, and in doing so initiated the first artist postage stamp performance. Sixty years later, mail artists E.F. Higgins and Buster Cleveland would stand on nearby Soho streets, covered in Cavellini artistamps, further extending the pioneering footsteps of the Baroness Elsa van Freytag-Loringhoven.

While researching a catalogue essay on Yves Klein and the Blue Stamp he affixed to a postcard announcing the 1957 exhibition of his monochrome blue paintings, "Yves Klein: Propositions Monochromes", at the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris, I interviewed Pierre Restany, the theoretician of the Nouveaux Realiste group, and Sidrah Stich, curator of a recent European travelling exhibition on Klein. But it was not until a meeting with Klein's childhood friend Arman, that I was able to dispel a veil of speculation that surrounds this famed stamp of blue (reference 2).

When asked if he knew how the stamps were perforated, Arman answered that he was there at the conception of the idea. Dealer Iris Clert, well connected in political circles, arranged for the stamps to be printed and perforated at the official French postage stamp printing office. This is completely plausible, for Clert would use her connections at a later date so that Klein could conceive his fire paintings at the testing centre of the national gas company. That incident ended in scandal, with the resignation of the director of the centre for allowing Klein to use nude models on the premises. His mailing of the invitation bearing the Blue Stamp was more uneventful. He and Clert simply paid the postal worker on duty to cancel them, paying the clerk the regular price for posting and a tip for his efforts.

Arman also told me he had himself created a sheet of stamps around 1961. If this is so, it is the same year that Robert Watts created his first stamp sheet, which is the earliest one I have seen to date. Although Klein's stamps were produced in sheets, their importance lay on being affixed to his invitation, a perfect complement to the paintings, but for him, none the less in importance. Watts was both a member of the Fluxus art group and a Pop artist, shown at that bastion of Pop, the Leo Castelli Gallery, in 1964. He was a professor for many years at Rutgers University, teaching alongside Alan Kaprow and Roy Lichtenstein. He created money and tablecloths, transforming commonplace consumer items into artworks, forging a closer blend of art and life like many of the downtown artists of the time. In four years, Watts created four stampsheets, culminating in his 1964 'Fluxpost 17/17', which was used for many years in the Fluxkits produced by George Maciunas. This stampsheet combined all the production skills Watts had mastered in his previous efforts. It remains an oft-cited totem of the Fluxus movement (reference 3).

Later in the decade, May Wilson, John Evans, and Patricia Tavenner found a source to have photostamps made from their photographs or collages. May Wilson had a particularly inventive approach to the medium. She made photobooth self-portraits of herself with grimacing, deliberately compromising, facial contortions. Once translated into photostamps, they were affixed to index-card postcards first spray-painted with a geometric stencil design.

Any discussion of artistamps in the 1960s is incomplete without mentioning the work of the late American artist Donald Evans, who died tragically in an Amsterdam house fire at the age of 31 in 1977. He was the ultimate creator of imaginary worlds, focusing his energy on the production of postage stamps for lands awash with fruits and flowers, bird eggs, and farm animals. His watercolour execution of these commemorative stamps was exquisite.

Very little serious exploration of the field has been made. There aren't any doctoral dissertations on artistamps that I'm aware of. There is little market for them. They are trapped between being a philatelic postal oddity and a novelty item unworthy of fine art criticism.

The literature of the field is, however, impressive. Catalogues have been produced documenting the artistamp activity over a twenty year period. Reference guides are being continually updated by James Warren Felter (INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF ARTISTAMP CREATORS) and Bugpost, who is compiling THE STANDARD ARTIST STAMP CATALOGUE, a listing of artistamp producers and their issues. Although the ARTISTAMP NEWS is under new editorship, it continues publication. An important artistamp publication has recently ceased to exist due to the untimely death of Joki Mail art of Minden, Germany. His SMILE magazine and other self-published works were one of the finest and most consistent records of the field. His death in 1997 at 54 is deeply regretted by all networking artists.

There have been exhibitions in national museums (Hungary, Switzerland, France), and recently Guy Bleus has issued a CD-ROM of his artistamp collection. Other major archives are found at Artpool in Budapest, the Anna Banana Archives in Sechart, British Columbia, Chuck Welch's International Register of Artistamps, and my own Modern Realism Archives, which contains over 3,000 stampsheets by 600 artists. Perhaps the largest public collection is at Oberlin College in Ohio, which obtained the artistamp archive of Harley. But almost every artistamp producer maintains his own collection, and there are impressive holdings in many areas of the world.

Another recent development in the artistamp field is the appearance of Web sites that feature the work of artists in this medium. James Felter and Chuck Welch have been leading the way in this area.

As one of the more visual aspects of mail art, artistamps are sure to attract continuing attention. Like the broader field of mail art, knowledge of the field is often limited to active participants, and most of the writing about them has been done by producers of the works. Until they are discovered by a larger audience, it remains the artists' job to keep a record of their activity. These notes are made in the hope that a fuller history will someday appear.

#### References.

- 1) Naumann, Francis M. NEW YORK DADA, 1915-23. Publ. Harry N. Abrams, New York, NY, 1994. Pages 168-175
- 2) Gaglione, Picasso, and Held Jr, John. MOVING INTO NEARNESS: THE FAKE PICABIA BROS. IN NEW YORK CITY. The Stamp Art Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 1996.
- 3) Gaglione, Picasso, and Held Jr, John. ROBERT WATTS: ARTISTAMPS 1961-1986. The Stamp Art Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 1996.

[Note added by the Editor: For those Calgary philatelists who would like to read a well-produced introduction to mail art, the book ETERNAL NETWORK by Chuck Welch was published by the University of Calgary Press and is available at the University Bookstore on campus.]

# A PRELIMINARY CHECKLIST OF POSTAL STRIKES

by Dale Speirs

Postal history isn't just how the mail flowed, it is how it didn't flow. Below is a list of postal strikes that I've been able to compile; notice of errors and omissions will be appreciated. Most of the modern postal strikes can be collected in the form of handstamp markings on inbound foreign mail, such as "Mail Embargo". Many covers have no markings and can only be described as strike covers from their postmark date.

1919 - one month in June (part of the Winnipeg General Strike)  
1924 - two weeks

1965 - 8 days (15 in Montréal)  
1968 - 22 days

1970 - 15 weeks  
1974 - 15 days  
1975 - rotating strikes from February 18 to March 28  
- national strike beginning October 2 and lasting 42 days

1978 - 3 days in September (inside workers)  
- 3 days in October (outside workers)

1980 - rotating strikes in September and October  
1981 - 42 days (Post Office then changed from government department to a Crown corporation)

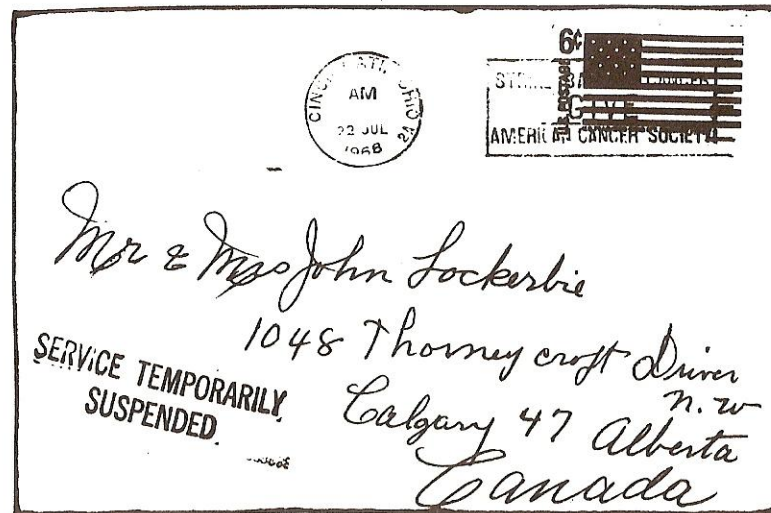
1987 - 18 days in June (letter carriers)  
- 16 days in September (inside workers)

1988 - August and September. Technicians and supervisors strike. Mail service slowed but not stopped.

1991 - rotating strikes in August, one day national strike in October

1997 - national strike November 19 to December 4

There were some bizarre results from the 1997 strike. I received two issues of a magazine from Japan. Issue #404 had two arrival bar codes, one for December 22 and another for December 29. It was delivered on the 31st. Issue #405 had only one bar code, dated December 22, and arriving December 30th. The backlog, in other words, was about eight days in the Calgary Mail Processing Plant.



These cut pieces illustrate the American postal response to Canadian strikes.

From top to bottom, they show marking for the strikes of 1968, 1975, and 1981.



ENLARGED  
RETURN TO SENDER

HOW TO USE A POSTAGE STAMP,  
OR,  
WHY DOES THE NUMBER "12:00" KEEP FLASHING ON MY VCR?  
by Dale Speirs

The birth of the postage stamp is generally agreed on as May 6, 1840, when the British post office first issued them. There are claimants from other countries that pre-date the Penny Black, but they are not accepted for a variety of reasons. Today stamps are common enough that the idea seems self-evident. It was not always thus; until the Penny Black was issued by Britain, postage was either paid in cash at the time of mailing or collected as postage due from the addressee.

1840 was not just the introduction of the postage stamp. It was also the lowering of postal tariffs so that the average person could afford to send or receive mail. In the old periodicals I have been researching are laments on the system of sending letters unpaid.

"The poor emigrants ... present themselves at the post offices, and on finding that their letters cost three shillings and fourpence, or perhaps five or six shillings, turn away in despair." (from PENNY MAGAZINE, 1841-7-10, volume 10, page 272).

The introduction of the postage stamp did require some instruction of the general public on how to use the new-fangled things, such as inscriptions along the sheet margins. That was to be expected at the time the idea was first introduced. What surprised me in my research was how long it took to educate people about this.

Just how non-evident the use of a postage stamp was can be surmised from the fact that two decades after they were introduced, the British PMG found it useful to issue a pressrelease on how to work the thing. I came across a copy of this release in the 1859-7-16 issue of ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS (volume 35, page 65).

"AFFIXING POSTAGE-STAMPS. — The Postmaster-General has issued the following notice: The best mode of affixing postage-stamps is to wet slightly the corner of the envelope and the gummed side of the stamp, and then gently to press the stamp til it is firmly fixed. The practice of dipping the stamp in water is objectionable, because, unless the stamp is immediately withdrawn and care be taken, by the use of blotting paper or some other absorbent, to remove any excess of moisture, the gum may be washed off or the stamp may be rubbed off the letter."

I don't know of anyone who puts a stamp on an envelope today by licking "slightly the corner", but the rest of it is not a subject for tutorials. Time has made the thing a matter of ease and user-friendliness. As I read the instructions on how to use a postage stamp, I couldn't help but think of all those VCRs with their digital clocks perpetually flashing "12:00".

MEMBERSHIP REPORT  
by Bob Perry

There are currently about 176 paidup members. There are quite a few members who have not paid their dues. I will be at the meetings on the first Wednesday of the month as well as the third Wednesday stamp sales to receive your dues. Some dealers have also not paid; we need your support.

1997 CHRISTMAS PARTY

The annual Christmas party was held December 3 at the Kerby Centre. 64 people sat down to eat, drink, and be merry philatelically. The Attrells looked after the food, and the Seredas tended bar. Bob Monilaws was the genial host of the ceremonies and conducted the stamp quiz. A good chance to see not only the usual suspects who turn out for the general meetings but also their spouses.

FOUNDERS' AWARD

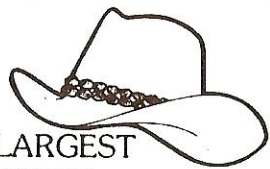
The Founders' Award is given at the Christmas meeting to a person deemed to have contributed significantly to the CPS in the previous year. The silver plate this year went to Isobel Attrell. In addition to her longstanding duties at the Christmas parties, she has helped out with the shows, and ran the club table at Royal 97 Royale. She is Past President of the CPS and has also served in a variety of other jobs, both formal and behind-the-scenes. One example is her help in stuffing envelopes to mail out the club bulletin, not a glamorous job but certainly very essential. Congratulations Isobel!

The cumulative list of Founders' Award winners is as follows.

- 1973 - Jim Sadler
- 1974 - Ken Ford
- 1975 - Tom Lemon
- 1976 - Walter Jackson

1977 to 1979 - used as a show award

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1980/81 - Don Fraser        | 1992/93 - no award        |
| 1981/82 - Keith Brown       | 1993/94 - Penny Borrowman |
| 1982/83 - Al Munro          | 1994/95 - Ernie Bell      |
| 1983/84 - Leanne Johnson    | 1995/96 - Bob Hoffman     |
| 1984/85 - John Jarabek      | 1996/97 - Isobel Attrell  |
| 1985/86 - Guy Boissonneault |                           |
| 1986/87 - Dale Speirs       |                           |
| 1987/88 - no award          |                           |
| 1988/89 - Greg Lang         |                           |
| 1989/90 - Mike McPhail      |                           |
| 1990/91 - Doug Kollar       |                           |
| 1991/92 - Perry Holinshead  |                           |



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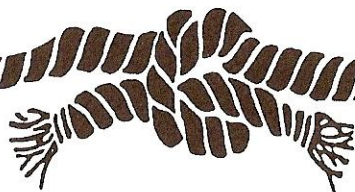
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### SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

These ads are free to paidup CPS members, and will also appear on the CPS Website at no additional cost. Mail your ads to Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, T2P 2E7, or hand them to me at meetings. Next deadline is April 1 for the May bulletin.

NOTE TO INTERNET VIEWERS: Unless otherwise stated, telephone numbers are area code 403. Alberta is on Mountain Standard Time.

FOR TRADE: New member from Claresholm collecting VFNH Canada plate blocks. Have many duplicates and hope to trade. Call Tony Burton at 625-4563 (phone and fax) or e-mail free-flt@agt.net

FOR SALE: Ukrainian and Russian stamps new and used. Also Ukrainian FDCs and special cancels from 1991 to date. Call Andy at 236-2037.

WANTED: Postmarks of western Canadian provinces on stamp, piece, or cover. Phone Al at 282-1030.

FOR SALE: "History of the Calgary Philatelic Society" for \$2 each from Dale Speirs at meetings, or add an extra \$2 for postage and send to CPS, Box 6830, Calgary, T2P 2E7.

WANTED: Postal history of the following Alberta towns. Postmarks must be good strikes; no fragments or weak strikes please. Eckville pre-WW2 postmarks and postcards. Hespero and Pitcox any era. Evarts and Leslieville pre-WW1. Write to Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, T2P 2E7, or see me at meetings.

WANTED: Small Queens Canada #34-47 and Registration stamps F1-F3 used. Phone for offer. Doug Kollar at 547-3838.

FOR SALE: 1984-1987 Canada Post annual souvenir collections. Individual for face value or take all for face less 10%. Call Doug Kollar at 547-3838.

WANTED: Booklet singles or multiples used on cover, any era. Price individually, as a batch, or ask for my offer. Will give generous trade of MNH Canada for items I need. Call Ed Harris at 274-0021 or see me at any meeting.

FOR SALE: United Nations FDCs in album, 62 covers for \$65, just like new. Australian States stamps, used for sale. Call Bob Perry at 282-4520.

FOR SALE: OLYMPLEX '88 show catalogue and FDC. Includes articles on Olympic philately, winter sports, and Calgary postal history. Price \$5 from Dale Speirs at meetings or write to CPS, Box 6830, Calgary, T2P 2E7.

Address changes and mailing label problems should be directed to Tim Presb or Bob Perry of the Membership Committee, not the Editor. See inside front cover of this issue for committee members and names to contact.

## MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS IN 1998

|           |           |       |                                |
|-----------|-----------|-------|--------------------------------|
| January   | 4         | ..... | Sunday bourse                  |
|           | 7         |       | General meeting                |
|           | 7         |       | Deadline for February bulletin |
|           | 21        |       | Auction                        |
| February  | 1         | ..... | Sunday bourse                  |
|           | 4         |       | General meeting                |
|           | 18        |       | Auction                        |
| March     | 1         | ..... | Sunday bourse                  |
|           | 4         |       | General meeting                |
|           | 18        |       | Auction                        |
| April     | 1         | ..... | General meeting                |
|           | 1         |       | Deadline for May bulletin      |
|           | 5         |       | Sunday bourse                  |
|           | 15        |       | Auction                        |
|           | 24 and 25 |       | BNAPS Spring Regional          |
|           | 26        |       | Stamp Day                      |
| May       | 3         | ..... | Sunday bourse                  |
|           | 6         |       | General meeting                |
|           | 20        |       | Auction                        |
| June      | 3         | ..... | Election meeting               |
|           | 7         |       | Sunday bourse                  |
|           | 17        |       | Auction                        |
| August    | 1         | ..... | Deadline for August bulletin   |
| September | 2         | ..... | General meeting                |
|           | 2         |       | Deadline for October bulletin  |
| October   | 7         | ..... | General meeting                |
|           | 21        |       | Auction                        |
| November  | 4         | ..... | General meeting                |
|           | 4         |       | Deadline for December bulletin |
|           | 18        |       | Auction                        |
| December  | 2         | ..... | Christmas party                |

MEETINGS and AUCTIONS are at Kerby Centre, 2nd floor, 1133 - 7 Avenue SW, at 730 pm. Auction lots should be in before 730 pm to allow viewing.

SUNDAY BOURSE is at Hounsfield Community Hall, corner 19 Street NW and 14 Avenue NW (across from Lion's Park LRT station) from 10am to 4 pm. Table rentals and other details from Mirko Zatka at 547-1435.

CALGARY REGIONAL GROUP OF THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY meets second Wednesdays except July and August at Museum of the Regiments. Details from Ed Harris at 274-0021.