

CALGARY PHILATELIST

Issue 133

April 2015



The postal history of Calgary includes the death of a postman in 1919 when a streetcar went out of control and crashed into a building. More on page 3 in the history of 17 Avenue South post offices.

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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.

A cumulative subject index from issue #1 to date for the CALGARY PHILATELIST exists but because of its length is too long to be published in this bulletin. A pdf copy can be had for free at www.calgaryphilatelicsociety.com.

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COMMITTEES - see page 15 for list of committee chairpersons

POSTAL HISTORY OF CALGARY: 17 AVENUE SOUTH

by Dale Speirs

As Calgary grew, 17 Avenue South from the Stampede rodeo grounds to the 14 Street SW hill became a business district, not just a traffic artery. Today the eastern half is known as the Red Mile, lined with numerous sports bars and restaurants. The western half is a mix of boutiques and fast food outlets. The area north of the avenue, in the Beltline and Connaught districts, has had high-density populations for much of its history, first in walk-up apartments, later as high-rise rentals, and in recent years as condo towers. As a result, 17 Avenue South had numerous post offices and retail postal outlets (RePOs) compared to other residential areas.

Canada Post records are very good up until the middle 1970s, after which it is difficult to find records of the RePOs. Thus I can write with reasonable assurance up to that time using the Post Offices and Postmasters Website [1], as well as Henderson's Directories [2]. Postmark collectors have been responsible for tracking them thereafter in private lists but there are many gaps. The situation has gotten worse because while Canada Post maintains a list of current RePOs on its Website (www.canadapost.ca), they wipe off any closed RePOs and do not maintain historical records easily accessible to philatelists.

Sub #4.

The Calgary Post Office opened its first sub-office in 1906 in the Inglewood district. Sub #1 is still going more than a century later, now as a RePO at Marshall Drugs. 17 Avenue South, however, didn't get a sub-office until a few years later, although other subs were within walking distance. It should be noted that there have been many Subs and RePOs within the Beltline and Connaught districts a few blocks away from 17 Avenue SW, but I am only going to write about the ones directly on the avenue.

Sub #4 originally began life in 1906 on 4 Street SW and moved up and down it until it went to a grocery store run by J.H. Nettleton at 602 - 17 Avenue West. It was there from 1912-08-19 until 1919-03-24. It then went a block down the avenue to 726 - 17 Avenue SW in the store of W.A. Vaughan. Times were tough in the post-war recession and he sold out to H.W. Carpenter, who couldn't make a go of it either and gave up Sub #4 on 1921-12-07.



The next postmaster had the better luck of doing business as the economy improved. William F. McGill operated the sub-office in his drug store at 801 - 17 Avenue SW until 1958-07-24. He retired and sold the drugstore to Harold Harry Henker, a pharmacist who carried on in the same location until 1962. The original building is long gone but there is a Shoppers Drug Mart on that location today which has a RePO.

Sub #4 then closed for more than a decade until McGill Drugs took it over again at its new premises at 723 - 17 Avenue SW from June 1976 to 1991-04-02, when Canada Post began shutting down sub-offices and replacing them with RePOs. During its time as a Sub, the postmarks had a Money Order Office Number (MOON) of 8164, which will be seen on its postmarks. The RePO used the new computerized Post Office Computer Number (POCON) 571490. The drugstore closed and was replaced by Semple Furniture in the same location, dates unknown. I don't know the furniture POCON, but the postal code on the postmark would be T2S 0B0. The postal code wouldn't change but every time a RePO changes ownership, even to this day, a new POCON is assigned to it and new postmarks are issued.

Subs #5 and #68.

Harry White opened Sub-office #5 on 1908-07-01 in his grocery store in the Bankview district, just up the hill from 17 Avenue SW. It was transferred on 1915-11-24 to Crooks Drug Store, with Ivan H. Crooks as postmaster. The drugstore was well known to Calgarians because of its unusual name. The building was on the northeast corner of 17 Avenue SW and 14 Street, at the bottom of the steep hill. It burned down on 2008-02-24, long after Crooks had gone. Sub #5 stayed only briefly at Crooks Drugs and was given up on 1916-09-16.

Over the next decade, Sub #5 shuffled up and down the avenue within a couple of blocks of 14 Street SW and sometimes around the corner onto 14 Street, with seven postmasters and six locations. It finally came to rest at Sunalta Foods on 1929-04-17 and gained a semblance of permanence with postmaster George Scott Balfour, who kept the job until 1944-10-31. The sub-office remained in that store until 1949-03-24 but had two more postmasters. It then began traveling again, with three locations and four postmasters, and finally moved away to 12 Avenue SW at 14 Street.

Crooks Drugs once again had a sub-office as from 1960-11-24, only now numbered Sub #68. Ivan had retired in 1951 and his nephew Albert Crooks now ran the drugstore. It held this sub-office until 1992-03-31, using postmarks with the MOON #8241 and later POCON #581488.

Death Of A Postman.

Calgary Transit began in 1909 as a streetcar system because the unpaved streets were too rough and muddy for buses. It was originally called the Calgary Municipal Railway. In 1946, the name was changed to Calgary Transit System and the final word dropped in 1970 to give the present name. Most streets by 1946 were paved. Trolley buses began replacing streetcars in 1947 and the conversion was done by 1950. At the same time, Calgary Transit began buying motor buses, first gasoline and then later diesel. The last trolley bus ran in 1975, and thereafter service was by diesel bus. Lines were identified by colour combinations until 1936. As an example, what is today Route 7 into South Calgary/Altadore was then called the Blue and Orange Line [3]. Route 7 is one of Calgary's oldest bus routes, dating from 1909, and much of it today still follows the original way.

Calgarians are familiar with how 14 Street SW comes down a steep hill to the intersection of 17 Avenue. In winter, bus and car drivers alike get entirely too much excitement trying to go up or down the hill in snowy or icy conditions. That was to cause the death of a Calgary letter carrier in 1919.

One of the iconic images of Calgary history is a photo of a streetcar lying on its side, smashed into Crooks Drugs. The streetcar was descending 14 Street SW hill at 06h10 on Monday morning, December 15, 1919. There was ice on the rails, and the motorman lost control. This ordinarily wouldn't matter since then and now Route 7 goes straight down 14 Street past 17 Avenue. Unfortunately a Calgary Municipal Railway employee had been chipping ice out of the rail switch at the base of the hill and forgot to re-set it for straight ahead. The streetcar, sliding helplessly down the hill, hit the switch at full speed and instead of going harmlessly straight ahead, swerved east on 17 Avenue. It couldn't and didn't make the turn and flopped over on its left, sliding into the drugstore. One man on the streetcar was killed and thirteen injured. The drugstore wasn't yet open for business and Ivan Crooks got a tremendous shock when he arrived a short while later to open his store [4].



The dead man was Robert Dougherty McWilliams, letter carrier #20 of the Calgary post office. He had been sitting on the righthand side of the streetcar, and when it tipped over, he was thrown downwards, smashing through a window on the opposite side. He died of head injuries at the scene. He was traveling with his son Alexander, also a postie. They were heading for the downtown Post Office, where Robert would pick up his daily mailbag of letters for delivery and his son would work inside the building as a clerk [5].

Sub #14.

Sub-office #14 began life in 1912 in the Mission district between 17 Avenue SW and the Elbow River. It bounced around several locations and was closed in 1918. In 1931 it was reactivated, this time in a drug store at 350 - 17 Avenue SW where it remained until it permanently closed on 1968-09-20. Proof strikes of the postmarks are shown below.



This location was across the boundary line from Mission, hence the re-use of this number. Harry Edwin Creech was the postmaster of the revived office, staying until 1937 when the drug store was sold to the King family. The postmastership regularly alternated thereafter between Frederick Edward King and his daughter Gweyn Elizabeth King. They sold out to Tamblyn Drugs, a now-extinct chain store, who took over on 1953-10-06. That ended 1968-09-20; the postmark for the final years having the MOON #8174.

Subsequent History.

Sub-office #160 is recorded for an unknown business at 450 - 17 Avenue SW from 1987 to 1989. It used the POCON #589128. There was a gap of several years, during which time the age of Sub-offices came to an end and they were replaced with RePOs. Mount Royal Hardware opened a RePO at their location 718 - 17 Avenue SW, from 1991-03-28. They operated with POCON #056537 until 1996-04-30, at which time the business was sold.

The new owners were in the same strip mall and Cards Etc took over. They didn't last long and Canada Post then stepped in and briefly operated in the same address as the Connaught post office. It didn't last long either but I don't know the closing date.

Thereafter any postal services were in RePOs in adjacent districts such as Mission or Connaught. However, postal service did return in 2009 when Shoppers Drug Mart opened a RePO in their store on the south side of 17 Avenue SW at 7 Street. It is called Lower Mount Royal, which is technically true since it is on the side of that prestigious neighbourhood, but it faces the Beltline district and undoubtedly gets most of its business from the condo towers across the avenue. The POCON is 103481.

Letter Carrier Depots.

A story that is going unnoticed by most philatelists is the major reorganization by Canada Post of its “last kilometre” distribution system, as it replaces letter carriers with supermailboxes and converts to a courier and parcels business due to the death of letter mail. There were letter carrier depots on 17 Avenue SW at one time. Depot #2 was established at 1005 - 17 Avenue West in 1947. In 1963 it was moved to 1411 - 17 Avenue SW where it stayed until 1969, after which it was consolidated into Station C on 12 Avenue SW. Depot #3 was briefly at 1505 - 17 Avenue SW from 1961 until 1963 but this was too much duplication. Depot #2 is now way down south on Fisher Street SE, south of Glenmore Trail and east of Macleod Trail.

References.

- 1] National Library of Canada (downloaded 2014-11-28) Post offices and postmasters. www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/postal-heritage-philately/post-offices-postmasters/Pages/search.aspx
- 2] Henderson's Directories for most years of Calgary's history are available in the Local History Room, 4th Floor, Central Branch, Calgary Public Library.
- 3] Sanders, Harry (2009) CALGARY TRANSIT: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY Published by The City Of Calgary, Alberta. Pages 33 to 35, 38, 47, 76, 100, 105, 118
- 4] Anonymous (1919-12-15) One killed and thirteen hurt when streetcar runs away on Fourteenth Street hill. CALGARY HERALD, pages 1 and 15
- 5] Hunter, Frederick (downloaded 2014-04-09) THE STORY OF BANKVIEW. <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~database/THE%20STORY%20OF%20BANKVIEW.htm> Pages 30 to 33.

SPRING BOURSE 2015

Due to booking conflicts, this year's Spring Bourse will be the weekend of May 2 and 3 at the Kerby Centre gymnasium instead of an April weekend as in past years. Volunteers are needed Friday, May 1, from 1700 to 20h00 for the set-up and again Sunday afternoon for the teardown after the bourse closes.

The bourse is open Saturday 10h00 to 17h00 and Sunday 10h00 to 16h00.

The auction will be held Sunday. Lots will be accepted at 10h00, with a maximum of ten lots per consignor. If there is space left over just before the auction starts, then additional lots may be accepted. The auction will be called at 13h00. Buyers must pay for their lots immediately the auction is over. Sellers can pick up their money beginning 15h30.

CONNECTIONS TO OUR PAST: PART 4. GORDON P. SNOWDEN

by Dale Speirs

STAMP COLLECTING, JANUARY 2ND, 1926. REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O. AS A NEWSPAPER.

STAMP COLLECTING

No. 638
(Vol. XXV, No. 14.)

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER
FOR
PHILATELISTS

PRICE
3^d

G. P. SNOWDON
1926, 27-104 STREET WEST.
CALGARY—ALBERTA—CANADA

Saturday, January 2nd, 1926.

SCHOOLBOYS' EXHIBITION,

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER,
JANUARY 2-8.

A Wonderful Display.

COME AND SEE US
AT THE
"Stamp Collecting"
STALL.

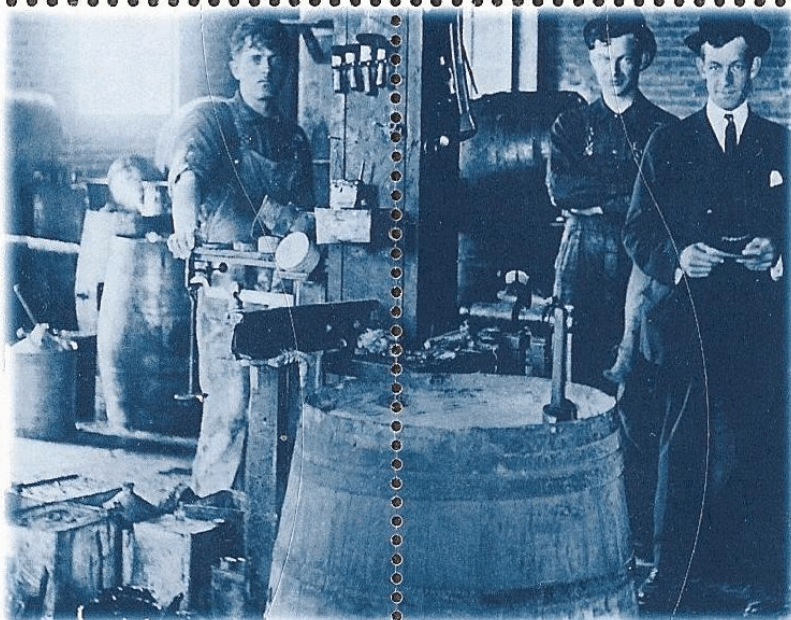
(Mr. A. H. Thompson's advertisement, which in the ordinary way would have occupied this space, is, by his courteous permission, transferred to an inside page this week.)



Gordon Snowden was active early in the history of the CPS. He was a Director in 1933/34, 1942/43, 1945 to 1947, 1950 to 1952. He also served a term as Vice President for 1943-45.

I don't have a photo of him but I came across a 1926 stamp magazine with his handstamp on it, a connection with our past.

Snowden worked in the family business, which was an early petroleum refining and retail oil company in Calgary. It was located in Ramsay and the building is still there on 11 Street SE. The family sold out in the 1960s. The refinery received recognition on the 2005 Alberta Centennial stamp issued by Canada Post, not on the front, but on the reverse. Part of the backing paper on the stamps showed a photo of the refinery (shown on next page).



*Snowdon Oil Refinery,
Calgary, ca. 1912*

*Raffinerie de pétrole
de Snowdon, Calgary,
vers 1912*

CPS YAHOO DISCUSSION GROUP

If you are a paid-up member of the CPS, one of the benefits of joining is a private discussion group on Yahoo restricted to within the club. The group is used for breaking news that would miss the bulletin, and for any general philatelic discussion that you may have. It is not a heavy-traffic site, so your email inbox won't be swamped. The day's postings by group members are compiled into a daily digest and automatically transmitted to members by Yahoo the following morning.

To join, see Dale Speirs in person at the meetings and give him a slip of paper with your name and email address. He will then send you an email invitation containing a link that you click on to join the group. Yahoo may require that you register but this is free and is not intrusive. No online or telephone registrations can be accepted, in order to avoid problems with spammers or trolls.

POST OFFICE CATS ON THE TAKE

by Leanteri Polvikoski

Many post offices around the world have had domestic cats on their premises for rodent control. Often they are pets directly cared for and subsidized by the staff, but in some places and times they were subsidized by post offices as official line items in the budget. In 1909, for example, the cost of maintaining U.S. Post Office cats was listed under “miscellaneous items necessary and incidentals to offices of the first and second classes”. Such cats were allowed \$135 per year per cat [1 and 2].

I have not been able to determine what the total limit was for cats per post office. Presumably a physically small post office would be limited to one cat, while cities with huge cavernous post office buildings would need more than one for sufficient rodent control. Even back then the people who noticed such things worried about the potential for line items such as this to be used as slush funds [3]. This belief is not entirely unfounded. In the 1800s, the spoils system method of filling post office positions often required a kickback from the recipient. This backfired in Philadelphia in 1882, when Republicans obtained a list of postal employees for the purpose of sending them campaign circulars soliciting donations. This was exposed to the public eye because the posties were in the habit of giving their cats regular names and listing them on government appropriations. Thus it was that the cats received requests to donate to the party [4].

References.

- 1] Anonymous (1909-10-10) Food for government cats. NEW YORK TIMES, page 1
- 2] Anonymous (1909-11-06) Cats in office. HARPER’S WEEKLY 53(2759):33
- 3] Van Santvoord, Harold (1909-10-13) Post Office cats. NEW YORK TIMES, page 10
- 4] Anonymous (1882-08-06) Assessment circulars. NEW YORK TIMES, page 5



WHAT IS A VALID TOPICAL STAMP?

by Elizabeth Saunaranta

One advantage of collecting topicals is that completism is not mandatory. Actually it isn't mandatory in country collecting either, but many collectors have deluded themselves that they must have one of everything for the country they collect. Country catalogues are taken as holy gospel, whereas few topicals have any catalogues, save the more popular ones like birds or flowers.

With topicals, it is usually self-evident which stamps to collect and which to ignore. For example, if you collect Winter Olympics, you can ignore all the wallpaper churned out by tropical countries where no one living has seen snow. You can also ignore stamps in which your topical subject is only a tiny part of the background and is not the primary subject.

Some stamps may seem to be wallpaper but are actually legitimate topicals for that country. For example, East Germany issued a set of stamps depicting fancy guppies, a sample of which is shown here. Guppies are native to the tropical areas of the Americas. However, they are one of the most common aquarium fish in the world, particularly in Europe and North America. Guppy fanciers in cold countries have bred all sorts of colour and tail variations not seen in the wild. Therefore, the East German stamps are legitimate topicals.

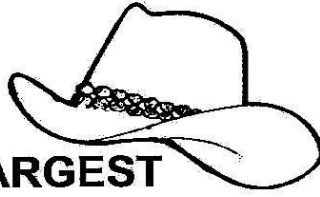


It works the other way as well. The goldfish was originally developed from wild carp in cold countries. Asia has been the centre of goldfish breeding for decades, and the fish farmers have developed many bizarre forms of goldfish that wouldn't survive a day in the wild.



STUDY GROUP NEWS

The Calgary Regional Group of the British North America Philatelic Society met on January 14 for a presentation by Graham O'Connor on RCMP postcards, from their earliest history as the North West Mounted Police to the modern day. At the February 11 meeting, on the occasion of the new Sir John A. Macdonald stamp, Hugh Delaney showed covers sent by or to the Fathers of Confederation.



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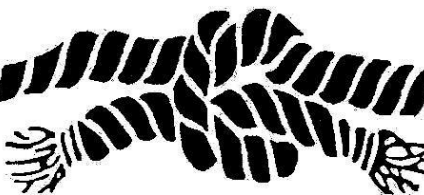
Bus routes 2, 6, and 7 stop by the building.

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**Looking for good
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**Bring it into our shop
and we'll make an offer.**



SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

These ads are free to paid-up CPS members, and will also appear on the CPS Website at no additional cost. Mail your ads to Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2E7, or hand them to me at meetings.

Unless stated otherwise, telephone numbers are area code 403. Alberta is on Mountain Time. Any advertiser can be reached through the CPS e-mail at calphilso@shaw.ca, but please allow time for forwarding to offline members.

WANTED: International machine cancels (year at bottom of cancel hub) on cover from Ontario, Quebec, and Maritimes. Email to: cec.coutts@telus.net

FOR SALE: People's Republic of China from 1990 to 2014. MNH, asking 50% of Scott. Phone Willi at 239-2273.

WANTED: complete set Dutch stamps 1852-1940. Contact Rob at 288-7501 or lrwestra@shaw.ca

WANTED: Book of Alberta proof strikes by Robert Lee. Call Milton Lowe at 243-0412 or email at aromatics@excite.com

FOR SALE: Fine used modern Canada and Australia. Please contact Michael Teekens at 805-4442 or michateekens@gmail.com

FOR SALE: Extensive collection of Alberta postmarks uniquely filed in 28 binders. Supplemented with historical data items of postal relevance. Contact Al at 282-1030 or dorandal@shaw.ca

WANTED: Used GB Machin Queen stamps with any selvage attached. Cash or trade (many countries). Call Georg at 547-0409.

WANTED: I volunteer at the Mennonite Community Centre store in Calgary. They raise money for worldwide disasters, and are looking for donations of old albums and pages, covers, and bulk stamps. To donate, please contact me, Greg Lang, at 282-1644.

FOR SALE: various QE2 Canada plate block sets between Scott #727 and #1070, various QV to KGV Canada VFNH singles and pairs between Scott #51 and #300. Contact Les at 278-3511.

FOR SALE: Large accumulation used off-paper, mostly pre-1990s commemoratives. Canada, USA, GB, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and kiloware. Phone Roland 243-1637 or decaenr@shaw.ca

FOR SALE: Major collections of many countries at liquidation prices. Call John at 474-1212.

WANTED: Canadian military covers and postcards with hospital ships (white with red crosses). Contact Jon Johnson at 253-8411 or jcjpferfins@hotmail.com

CLUB NEWS

The February issue of this bulletin was mailed with the Flames Zamboni stamp from the Lower Mount Royal RePO at Shoppers Drug Mart on 17 Avenue SW and 7 Street. This RePO is on the Red Mile, which ties the postmark in with the stamp. For outlanders unfamiliar with Calgary, the Red Mile runs along 17 Avenue South from the Saddledome hockey arena to 8 Street SW and is lined with numerous sports bars and restaurants. On the rare occasions that the Flames win, there is celebrating along the Red Mile into the small hours of the morning. Otherwise the avenue is quiet as the grave.

The President's Pot was awarded at the February 4 meeting to Jim Senecal for his work with the youth club. At the March 4 meeting, it went to Norma Nielson for her work behind the scenes on behalf of the club and the show.

Dale Speirs had an article on the postal history of the Livingstone valley (along Highway 22 down to Crowsnest Pass) published in the 2005 February issue of POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL (USA). He also had his postal history of the Claresholm district in the 2015 Q1 issue of BNA TOPICS. The 2015 Mar/Apr issue of CANADIAN PHILATELIST contains Part 2 of his history of the Highwood district and the Duke of Windsor's cattle ranch.

The Collectors Club of Chicago has given the Robert Pratt Award for best Newfoundland publication to Jim Taylor for his recent book on the postal history of the French Shore of western Newfoundland.

The March programme was a pair of mini-talks, the first by Norma Nielson on Canadian WW1 "In Prize" revenue stamps. There were only three Prize Court cases for ships seized in the war. Donna Trathen then spoke on the Lunar New Year stamps of Jersey.

COMMITTEES

Archives	Dale Speirs	701-0174
Auctions - regular	Doug Kollar	547-3838
- silent	Jim Senecal	547-7681
Bulletin - Editor	Dale Speirs	701-0174
Circuit books	Larry Tweedale	282-9726
Library	Penny Borrowman	686-2662
Life Members	Gerry Vader	293-0158
Membership	Julius Szekrenyes	282-7982
Programmes	vacant	
Webmaster	Dave Bartlet	829-3580

MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

2015

March	14	Junior Club meeting
	18	Auction
	25	CAPE meeting
April	1	General meeting
	8	BNAPS Regional Group meeting
	15	Auction
	22	CAPE meeting
May	1	Spring Bourse set-up begins at 17h00
	2 and 3	Spring Bourse
	3	Spring Bourse - auction lots accepted 10h00
	3	Spring Bourse - auction called 13h00
	3	Spring Bourse - sold lots picked up 15h30
May	6	General meeting
	6	Deadline for June bulletin
	13	BNAPS Regional Group meeting
	20	Auction
	27	CAPE meeting
June	3	General meeting
	10	BNAPS Regional Group meeting
	17	Auction
	17	Deadline for July bulletin

SPRING BOURSE will be at the Kerby Centre, main floor gymnasium. Details from Walter Herdzik at 238-7845. Please note the new dates.

MEETINGS and AUCTIONS are at the Kerby Centre, Room 205 (Lecture Room), 1133 - 7 Avenue SW, at 19h30. Auction lots should be in before 19h30 to allow bidder viewing.

CALGARY REGIONAL GROUP of the BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY meets second Wednesdays. For details about meeting places and times, contact Dave Bartlet at 829-3580.

JUNIOR CLUB meets monthly on Saturdays. Information from Jim Senecal at 547-7681.

CAPE (CALGARY ASSOCIATION OF PHILATELIC EXHIBITORS) meets fourth Wednesdays at the Condon Building boardroom. For details, contact Jim Taylor at 238-3698.