

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

A publication of the Czechoslovak  Philatelic Society of N. America

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EDITORIAL

In this issue the members will find the detailed financial report of the Treasurer accompanied by the accounting of a Certified Public Accountant. You will note that the Treasurer is numbering his reports because it is his procedure to send out monthly statements to the President, Secretary, and Editor, to enable these officers to see the financial status of the society at regular intervals. We wish to comment here that in its entire history our society has never had such a balance with no outstanding bills at all at the end of any year. The primary reason for this, we believe, is the more prompt payment of dues by members due to the efforts of the Treasurer. The increase in active membership dues accounts for part of it also. As we stated before, with efficient handling of funds and with payment of dues by all members we will be able to set aside a sum for the publication of a handbook in the not too distant future.

The Specialist is your publication and we would gladly publish news items about our members. Why not drop us a few lines whenever you feel that other members should hear about your activities.

The Amendments published in January were passed by twenty-three votes in favor and none against. Therefore those Amendments are now part of our Constitution. We will add all the Amendments to the text and will try to have the Constitution printed at no cost to the society. Thus we should be able to mail each one of you a copy with an issue of the Specialist. This may not happen before the coming Fall but we will try our best to get it done.

Recently we were criticized for not having given proper coverage to the Exhibition of the New York Branch in November at the Collectors Club. We must admit that we are guilty, because we should have gone into detail on it. The efforts of members at these non-competitive exhibitions should at least be compensated by appropriate descriptions of the affair. We wish to apologize for our neglect in this instance.

In Sammler-Lupe, a very fine German philatelic publication, we saw the beginning of an extremely interesting article on the Czechoslovak Military Units in Foreign Countries and their Fieldposts. We will obtain permission for the reprinting of the article which should prove good reading for all of you. We will translate the article when permission has been received.

During 1962 twelve collectors joined our ranks, of which number, nine are accounted for by the New York Branch. Membership Chairman George Koplowitz is contacting all collectors whose interest in Czechoslovak stamps can be found in membership lists of the large philatelic societies. He has been doing

this for the past three years and has been donating his expenditures to the society.

In the March issue of the Specialist we made some remarks regarding Siberian covers. Now we wish to say a few words about the Silhouette issue. In correspondence an outstanding collector of Siberian items has voiced his opinion that there is possibly a valid reason to believe that some Silhouette stamps, gummed in Russia, were perforated 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ in Vladivostok toward the end of the stay of the Legion. We will not go into extensive details on this, because it is our sincere belief that this should be published after careful study by that collector. As you know we all are under the impression that the following Silhouettes exist: Imperforate, no gum; imperforate with hand applied gum in Russia; gummed, perforated 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in Russia and finally the ungummed, imperforate sheets returned to Prague where they were gummed and perforated 13 $\frac{3}{4}$. Until the disclosure of our correspondent we believed that our covers with Silhouettes perforated 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ and cancelled with one of the valid handstamps, were manufactured and have never seen Russia. Also, the numerous stamps of that issue on piece, with proper postmarks, we kept only as interesting items of no genuine value. The sheets we possess of the 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ variety have the smooth, white gum of the Prague perforation. The collector states that the Vladivostok perforation is uneven. We also have a strip of twenty of 25 K which has the gum apparently of Russian origin but the 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ perforation is perfect. We print this with the idea that members having these items in their collections may look over their holdings and communicate with us. We should be only too glad to supply our correspondent with as much information on the subject as possible. The study of the Siberian Fieldpost is a fascinating one. There are numerous reference books available which deal with the Czechoslovak Legion. We found Kennan's book very enlightening and if we study the history of the Legion we may understand the postal service better. We do not know whether Captain Novotny has ever given more details on it, beside the book he published. We feel rather that the average member of the Legion knew very little about the postal service hence we cannot secure much information from any of those still alive. There are many things in this area we do not understand. One cover mailed from Fieldpost 12 proves to have been mailed from Semipalatinsk, which is in Kazakh SSR, 560 miles NNE from Alma-Ata. This is South of the Siberian Railroad, just about halfway between Omsk and Irkutsk. The latter's Fieldpost number was 1 and Omsk 4. Even if the service was directed east and west of Irkutsk, we cannot understand the numbers of those offices. Our good worker, Jerry Verner, began some serious study of this phase of it. We are told that troops were always on the move. Well, we realize that, too. Our experiences in WW I and WW II give us some idea about that. Troops usually inherit a fieldpost number and do not take it with them.

We have no report on Compex except for the brief release inserted in the last issue. We also do not have any information from the Chicago Branch.

WANTED FOR PERSONAL USE

The following SPECIALISTS are desired. Will pay the best prices.

1940	January and February	1941	April
1942	All issues bound or unbound		
1943	January, March, April, May, June, September, and October		
1944	June and November	1945	January and February

Dr. J. Matejka, Hotel La Salle, Chicago, Ill.

TREASURERS REPORT #10

Income:		Expenses:	
Transfer from Chicago	\$ 277.78	Printing Specialist Nov. 1961 to	
Dues	1391.20	December 1962	\$946.24
Donations	32.00	Postage Specialist	169.71
Advertisements	391.80	Binding Specialist 1961	67.50
Sale of Books	103.54	Stationery	139.50
Income Compex	116.25	Dues, SPA, APS, Feder.	11.00
Refund Compex	368.53	Compex Deposit	180.00
Circuit Commission	14.16	Compex Expenses	163.94
Commission Hradčany Handbk.	9.60	Postage	73.39
Interest, Savings account	9.44	Bank expenses	4.25
Misc.	4.71	Misc.	30.45
	<u>\$2,719.01</u>		<u>\$1,785.98</u>
Total Income	\$ 2,719.01		
Total Expenses	1,785.98		
IN TREASURY	\$ 933.03		
*Checking Account	\$ 323.59		
Savings Account	609.44		
	<u>\$ 933.03</u>		

This is a report for a whole year of 1962, since taking over from the previous treasurer. The report speaks for itself. As of this date there are absolutely no obligations to be paid.

During 1962 we had 255 paid up members.

As of this date 129 members paid up for 1963.

This above report will be verified by a CPA—not member of our Society—and if found correct published in Specialist. Any inquiries will be gladly answered.

Czechoslovak Philat. Society
Joseph Stein, treasurer

31 December 1962

February 18, 1963

Czechoslovak Philatelic Society
c/o Joseph Stein, Treasurer
673 Hinsdale Street
Brooklyn 7, New York
Gentlemen:

I have made an examination of the books and records of your organization for the year ended December 31, 1962, and have found them to be correct.

A summary of transactions for the year is as follows:

Balance—January 1, 1962—Transferred from Chicago	\$ 277.78
Add: Receipts for Year 1962	2,441.23
Total	\$2,719.01
Deduct: Disbursements for Year 1962	1,785.98
Balance—December 31, 1962	\$ 933.03
The balance shown above consists of the following:	
Checking account—Commercial Bank of North America	\$ 323.59
Savings account—Commercial Bank of North America	609.44
Total	\$ 933.03

The detailed report of Mr. Joseph Stein, Treasurer of your organization, was found to be in agreement with the above summary of transactions and balances as at December 31, 1962.

Respectfully submitted
Lester J. Mason, Certified Public Accountant

**RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHY AS DEPICTED ON THE
STAMPS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

by C. Hedley Osbourn

(Reprinted with permission from the Coros Chronicle)

Part II
(continued)

The Pilgrim's House at Velehrad
(Type A24, A315)

This stamp depicts a famous pilgrimage center in Moravia, from the painting by Julius Marak, now hanging in the presidential box in the National Opera House.

Velehrad is said to be the place where Cyril and Methodius first preached in Moravia. The stamps show the monastery built by the Benedictines in 1131. At present, two great church spires fill the skyline, and on the stone base of the wayside cross, at the entrance to the village, is carved the chalice, the Husite sign. Methodius died here, but where he is buried no one knows. There is a great annual pilgrimage to Velehrad. The episcopal church is 700 years old, but remains of a much older building have been found, during a search made for the body of Methodius, who legend says is buried here. Huge stone capitals, bases and parts of columns, beautifully decorated in the Byzantine style, were dug up, and these are now in the museum. A stone sarcophagus, shown by the cross to be that of a bishop was also found, and it raised great hopes, but it was empty.

Good King Wenceslas

Wenceslas stands out as the great saint of Bohemia. Even in life, he was surnamed the Holy. He was carefully trained in the Christian religion by his grandmother, Ludmilla. Historically, he has been accused of being too submissive to the German King, but it must be remembered that he stood between two fires (or rather "two fears") as Bohemia has nearly always done; and his brother and successor Boleslav, who had opposed this policy of vassalage, was obliged to return to it himself after spending all the early years of his reign in fighting his powerful western neighbor.

During his short reign of eight years Wenceslas, or Václav, as he is also known, showed himself to be an enlightened ruler, far in advance of his time. He removed gibbets from public places. He also prohibited torture as a means



The beautiful and intricate St. Wenceslas set issued by Czechoslovakia in 1929. St. Wenceslas is seen on a horse, at the founding of St. Vitus Cathedral, and at the moment of his assassination.

of extracting confessions. His chief aim seems to have been to live up to his Christian profession, according to his understanding of what this implied. Twice he is said to have offered personal combat to an invading prince in order to save his country from the horrors of war. He would often spend a great part of the night in prayer, and gave largely to the churches. But in his family there was constant strife between the peaceful ideals of Christianity and the old paganism. Terrible results had already ensued. The gentle grandmother Ludmilla had been murdered while at prayer. And Wenceslas himself finally fell a victim to the enmity of his brother Boleslav, who lured the prince to a Church Festival at S'ava Boleslav, and there attacked and killed him. This happened on September 28th, 929, and the anniversary is still observed in Czechoslovakia as the Day of Saint Vaclav. He was canonized by the Church.

Check List and Explanatory Notes:

Saint Václav on a Horse (Type A30). From a painting by Mikuláš Aleš, and taken from the title page of the opus "Cechy," published in 1882.

Saint Václav Founding the Church of St. Vít (Vitus) (Type A31). A painting on glass by Felix Jenewein, above the entrance to the building for Retrospective Art during the Jubilee Exposition.

The Death of Saint Václav (Type A32). From a painting by Josef Mánes.

Statue of St. Wenceslas (Type A33). Stands in Wenceslas Square, Praha. (Type A128).

Depicted on commemorative issue for founding of Charles University, Praha.

The Hradčany, if not built by Prince Václav, was considerably enlarged and beautified by him. It is a vast fortified palace of the ancient kings of Bohemia, now the seat of the Czechoslovak government and residence of the president. The castle has over 700 rooms. The date of the first building is unknown, but neolithic remains have been found on the site. The history of Bohemia is closely knit to the history of the Hradčany. Originally it was built of wood, but it is thought that Václav had the first stone walls built.

(Type A1, A17, A87, A137, A158, A163-4, A254, AP6, AP9, AP10, Bohemia—A10, No. 1-53, 119-120, 251, 368, 406, 426-429, 621, C16-C17, C25-C27, C44, Bohemia—B8, A292, AP11.) (Type A75, Bohemia A5, A26, Bohemia A30, A292, AP11.)

St. Vitus Cathedral, founded in 930 by the Prince-Saint Wenceslas, rebuilt and enlarged by Charles IV, and remodeled in modern times.

The Hussite Movement

The second half of the fourteenth century witnessed a rising tide of reform in Bohemia. There many of the clergy were worldly and corrupt. There too, preachers were denouncing the evils in the church and society, and were appealing to the Bible as the rule of life, and demanding more frequent communion.

Of this reform movement, John Hus (1373-1415) became the outstanding leader. He was of humble birth and death early deprived him of his father. He was reared by his mother and was encouraged by her in his struggles to obtain an education. He studied philosophy and theology at the University of Prague, then newly founded and one of the most famous in Europe. In 1403 he was ordained to the priesthood. Eventually he was dean of the faculty of philosophy and rector of the University of Prague. He must have had charm and gifts of leadership to have risen to such prominence. Moreover, not even his bitterest enemies seem to have been able to find anything amiss in his life, either private or public.

In 1402 Hus became rector and preacher to the chapel of the holy Innocents of Bethlehem, in Prague. In that post, by his eloquence and earnestness

he attracted all classes, from the highest to the lowest, and speedily became one of the most influential men in the country. During Hus's boyhood the king of Bohemia, Charles IV, had made Prague a center notable in architecture and prosperity. Hus preached in both Latin and Czech and by his use of the latter stimulated a patriotism which was already growing. Yet he was not as concerned with national feeling as he was to reach the populace in the speech of daily life. He denounced the evils in the Church, from parish priests to Pope, held that Christ and not Peter was the foundation on which God had founded the Church, and that, far from being inerrant, many Popes had been heretics. He was marked by high ethical purpose rather than radical theological speculation and wished moral reform rather than ecclesiastical revolution.

It should be stated here, that the writings of John Wycliffe of England were being read extensively in Prague, and Hus was deeply influenced by them.

As was to be expected, opposition developed. Hus was popular with the masses and with many of the aristocracy. In fact, he was confessor to the Queen. However, the clergy whose manner of life was being attacked, were critical, and even honest conservatives were disturbed. The situation was complicated by domestic political dissensions, divided loyalties in the Great Papal Schism, and the traditional Czech resentment against the Germans. In the German-Czech tension, in 1409, the Czechs were given control of the university. Hus became dominant in the university. But the Archbishop of Prague was antagonistic and obtained a decree from the Pisan Pope ordering the surrender to the Archbishop of all Wycliffe's writings for burning, and that amounted to the silencing of Hus. Hus refused to comply, and on excommunication by the Archbishop he appealed to the Pope, John XXIII*. Matters went from bad to worse, and on the request of the king, Hus left the city (1412). Yet he continued to preach and generally in the open air. Czech sentiment was with him.

Hus and his preaching had now attracted attention which went beyond the borders of Bohemia. The Council of Constance was sitting, and Hus was urged to place his case before them. Sigismund of Hungary gave him letters of safe conduct, but at Constance he was arrested and imprisoned. The Council formally condemned Hus on several counts. Hus declared he was being accused of maintaining positions which he did not hold, that he was willing to be informed by the Council of his errors, and that he was prepared to submit to its judgment, but only if by so doing he did not offend God and his conscience.

The issue was clearly joined. The Council, insisting as a matter of principle on its supreme authority in the Church, could not dismiss Hus without compromising the basic convictions of its competence which had brought it into being. Hus was condemned. Wasted by prolonged imprisonment, illness and sleeplessness, still protesting his innocence and refusing to abjure his alleged errors, Hus was silenced, degraded from the priesthood, and turned over to the secular arm. He was thereupon (July 6, 1415) burned at the stake.

The burning of Hus did not end the movement of which he had been the leader. Indeed, it furthered it. Hus became a national hero. While he was in prison in Constance, some of his followers began giving the cup in the communion to the laity. Hus approved. In Bohemia, those who held to Hus fell into two camps. One, aristocratic, known as the Ultraquists because in the communion they gave both the bread and the wine to the laity, wished the free preaching of the Gospel and a moral clergy and stood against only those practices of the Catholic Church which they regarded as forbidden by the Bible. The other, the Taborites, who took their name from their chief fortress and who were led by the blind general, Zizka, were from the humbler ranks of society and went on the principle of rejecting everything for which they could not find express warrant in the Bible. These two groups together were invincible as a fighting force, but apart from that they could not agree, and fought each

other. The Pope declared a crusade against the Hussites, but eventually a truce was arrived at when the Council of Basel (1436) granted certain concessions, including the communion to the laity.

* John XXIII, last antipope of the Western Schism.

(to be continued)

A VISIT TO A STAMP AUCTION

By J. Howard Rossbach

Reprinted from SPA Journal

Much has been written recently about the advisability of buying postage stamps at auction. While I have no desire to advocate either buying at auction or not buying at auction, I can say to those of you who cannot attend such a sale: "Come along with me—we'll go together and see what it's like." To those of you who do attend auctions, I say: "Come along with us anyway; perhaps a smile or two of recognition will cross your face."

I guess I'd better begin by introducing myself since we will be spending the afternoon together. I am no dealer—just a collector. I can only spend a few hundred dollars a year on my stamp collection. The rest of the money—you have guessed it—goes to raising an ebullient little family. The demands of my profession make a visit to an auction a treat seldom enjoyed. I specialize in collecting the stamps of the U. S. A., Great Britain and British America—20th Century mint and 19th Century catch-as-catch can. I am no danger of ever completing the collection.

Let's meet at the Grand Central Station in New York City a few days before the auction. This will give us a short time to run up to the auction house and look over the lots that interest us. Did you get your catalog in the mail? Did you mark the items that struck your fancy? Good. So did I.

Why look at the lots, since they are described in the catalog? Well, no matter how reliable the auction house is, there are gradations between classifications, and you'd just better have a look-see yourself. For example, a stamp is almost centered but is very slightly to the upper right. Should it be classed as "fine" or "very fine"? It really could be either. It may be described either way in the catalog. While top auction houses will give you a prompt refund on any doubtfully described lot, it is silly to buy a pig in a poke if you do not have to. You might as well know what you are bidding on. This is especially important in the case of a set of stamps marked "F-VF" (fine to very fine). Before you can intelligently decide how much to bid, you must find out which values in the set fit into each category. Thus in a set where the bottom values start at 10c apiece and the top denomination hits \$20, your bidding picture will change considerably according to whether the latter stamp is "fine" or better.

Then there is the matter of hinge marks. These can range from minor gum disturbances to old-fashioned, billboard type, "killer" hinges that practically cover the whole back of the stamp. You will also find much variety lurking behind a description of "tiny thin" or "faint crease" or "some rugged perfs."

In the case of larger lots inspection is imperative. How can you know what to bid on a lot described as

"BERMUDA, 1865-1926, 77 stamps mostly
unused, some dupl. F-VF — (cat) \$127."

unless you have examined the group?

Here we are at the Fiction Stamp Auction Co. We enter a large auction room and sign in at a raised desk in a front corner. This is the auctioneer's

rostrum. It is now occupied by a custodian who watches us as we examine the lots. He also keeps at his desk a book which contains particularly valuable small lots. We have to examine these at his desk.

The custodian knows us and greets us with an inquiry as to our health and the query "Where have you been keeping yourself?" You are introduced and welcomed. We chat a bit about recent sales and learn that prices are running pretty high. The custodian lends us stamp tongs, a magnifying glass and a small piece of thin black cardboard. Why the cardboard? It is a black background against which perforation defects show up more readily. It also highlights the centering of the stamp.

Now we are ready to examine. I am going to bid on the U. S. \$3 Columbian Scott #243 unused (cat. \$100). There are three such stamps in the coming sale with consecutive lot numbers:

- #100—\$3 yellow green, o.g., VF
- #101—\$3 yellow green, part o.g., appears VF
- #102—\$3 Yellow green, faults under regumming, perfs cut in at right."

The small lots are kept in small loose leaf books that house 50-100 lots each. Individual stamps are usually either mounted with a hinge or enclosed in a glassine pochette. One corner of the pochette is fixed to the page so that we can see both sides of the stamp without removing it from its container. Sets will usually be in an approval card placed in a glassine envelope that in turn is attached to the page.

We take the appropriate book and return to our table with it. We look at lot #100. What a beauty! Perfectly centered and fresh in color, it will probably sell around catalog. Lot #101 on its face also looks beautiful. We turn it over. You can plainly see where a large old-fashioned type hinge has been removed with some gum disturbance. The rest of the gum is OK. Whether or not you decide to bid on this one is a matter of personal taste. I myself do not recoil from such a hinge mark, but I realize that the stamp is less valuable because of it. I make the note "pretty fine" in my catalog.

As for lot #102—well, let's pass it by. I do not care to buy regummed or re-perforated stamps at any price. You will undoubtedly get a bargain here if you decide to buy, but I have been told that such a stamp can cast suspicion on your whole collection in the event that you ever have to sell it.

You may naturally ask "How can you tell that the first two stamps were not regummed or reperf'd?" I cannot. On this I must rely on the integrity and expertise of the auction house. This emphasizes the fact that it is well to deal only with reliable concerns. "Let the buyer beware," as the old Romans used to say.

Let's go on to look at the other lots that interest us. In sets, we pay particular attention to the condition of the most expensive stamps. When we come to the larger lots that are housed in individual large envelopes or folders, we can really just get a feeling about the condition of the stamps. We also must determine whether the lot contains too many stamps that we already have to make bidding on it worthwhile. Often you can buy stamps cheaper in large lots than in several small lots. This is so because you are one of the few people who have looked at a particular lot and know what it contains.

Now we have completed our examination and have made notes in our auction catalogs. There is one thing more that we can do. We can generally get an estimate from the auctioneer as to what price any lot will bring. This is a useful, if sometimes inaccurate, guide. Most top auctioneers tend to undervalue the stamps to some degree, and you had best be prepared to go above the estimate if you expect to be the successful bidder. Some auction houses will tell you the amount of the top bid that they have on their book. Other auc-

tioneers snort with indignation if you attempt to obtain this information. In the case of the Fiction Stamp Auction Co. we are lent a copy of the auction catalog with an estimated price written alongside each lot. We had best make a note of these, realizing that they are probably on the low side.

It is closing time, and the custodian would not be unhappy if we left. I'll say "Good-bye," and I'll meet you Saturday and then on to the sale which begins at 2 p.m.

The great day has finally dawned and your train has arrived in New York's Grand Central Station on schedule. We have time for a bite of lunch before the auction begins. I am glad to see you have not forgotten your sale catalog with the notes you made when we last met.

Luncheonettes abound nearby where we can get a sandwich or an omelet. A nice Dry Martini? No, thanks—I think we had best forego it. We do not want to have our enthusiasm outstrip our cold appraisal of the lots in the heat of the auction. I have always tried to maintain a "reluctance" to bid, and it has saved me money.

We arrive at the auction room of the Fiction Co. and find that some extra rows of chairs have been added. A few other prospective buyers have already arrived. Most of them seem to know each other. They greet each other without particular warmth. They behave just like what they really are—competitors. A basic undertone of mild excitement is present. It is like a courtroom before the judge arrives.

In the main the bidders are either dealers who buy to resell or buyers' agents. Here, for example, is Mr. John Doe of the Doe Stamp Co. His company not only sells stamps to collectors who submit "want lists," but it also conducts mail auctions of its own (all bids by mail only with no competing floor bidding). I must say that I do not do much business with the Doe Company, except for occasional individual stamps. As for larger lots I would prefer to compete with him at the Fiction auction rather than pay his mark-up. The same goes for Richard Roe who advertises individual items. I have seen him buy similar lots for less money than his listed prices.

Here is gentlemanly Henry Hoe, a buyers' agent. He apparently has a fine reputation and is treated with deference. He has been commissioned by certain buyers to buy specific lots for them at or below fixed price limits. For this he is paid 5% by the buyer. We will see how he works as the auction progresses.

It is just about time for the sale to begin. The room has filled to about thirty people. The choice seats are up front where the bidders have a chance to see each lot as it is briefly held up by the auctioneer's assistant before sale. We note that Mr. Annahaf, a dealer and an active bidder has obtained one of the coveted places.

The auctioneer enters and mounts the rostrum. Mr. Charles Fiction is a dapper little man with a small, well trimmed moustache. He is immaculately dressed and wears a modest sized rose in his lapel. His most striking feature is a pair of piercing, honest eyes.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," begins the English type voice, "today we are offering Part Two of the U. S. and British Colonial Collection formed by the late Colonel Decedent. All lots are sold without reserve and subject to the terms of sale on page 1 of the catalog. Are we all ready? We start with the U. S. issue of 1869. Lot number one, the ten cent yellow, unused, very fine. I have \$24, 24—(here a dealer raises his pencil) 25, at 25 dollars, 26, (another dealer nods his head almost imperceptibly), 27, 28, 28, at \$28. All done? So!l to "AB" on my right for \$28." As the dealer designated as "AB" lowers his pencil in triumph, we had best take a closer look at what happened.

On the Fiction book the highest bid sent in by mail on this lot was \$26; the

second highest: \$23. Mr. Fiction opened the bid at the lowest price at which the high mail bidder could have bought the lot if there had been no competition from the floor. The bid of \$26 was the last mail bid. Thereafter the contest shifted completely to the floor.

Each bid is roughly 5% over the previous bid—rounded out to even amounts. Thus up to \$10 the minimum raise is 25c, and thereafter:

Up To	Minimum Raise
\$20	\$.50
36	1.00
50	2.00
80	2.50
130	5.00
200	10.00
400	who cares?

These amounts are flexible. The auctioneer gets the feel of the bidding and may increase the minimum on an active lot. This is especially true when the bid on the book is low. For example the high book bid is \$15 on a lot that should sell for \$30. Five floor bidders signal on the lot. The auctioneer will probably make minimum raises of a dollar instead of fifty cents. It saves time.

Floor bidders have curious methods of signaling their bids to the auctioneer. They seem to want to conceal their actions from the rest of the room. Thus Mr. "AB" hunches his shoulders forward and holds a pencil upright against his chest so that the eraser touches the second top button of his shirt. If Mr. Fiction seems not to recognize this classic pose, he twizzes the eraser end slightly. This is enough for the auctioneer. He has a bid! Mr. AB continues to bid this way until his pencil drops.

Mr. "CD" is a "pencil flicker." He holds a lead pencil by the tip, more or less parallel to the ground. To make a bid he raises the eraser portion and then flicks it forward toward the auctioneer. Each bid is done the same way. You will note that his bidding stance does not continue, as in the case of Mr. AB.

Mr. "EF" is a "nodder." He conveys his bid to the auctioneer by nodding his head affirmatively at him. Nodders fall into two rough classes: Back-room nodders have a clear cut motion. Their protection is the fact that everyone is normally facing the auctioneer. Mr. EF is a front room nodder. He is torn between being close enough to get a good look at each lot on the one hand and the built-in anonymity of the back of the room on the other. He compromises by sitting near the front and nodding imperceptibly—for the auctioneer's eyes alone. This doesn't quite work out. We can observe his tik-like, bobbing motion if we look for it.

Mr. "HH"—none other than Henry Hoe, the buyers' agent whom we have already met is alternately a back room nodder and a finger pointer, according to his mood. Finger pointing is accomplished by raising the right index finger and then bringing down the hand so that it points in the general direction of the auctioneer.

At the Fiction sale we have no "hitchhiker." At smaller auctions sometimes a trusted bidder holds the lots up to be viewed. His back is thus to the auctioneer. Showing the lots means that incidentally he himself gets a very good look at them. Bidding by this individual is done by the classic hitchhiking gesture over his shoulder.

Of course, at many sales there are newcomers who shun the tactics of semi-concealment. These tyros generally bid by raising the inevitable pencil in a manner similar to a small boy pressed to the limits of endurance, urgently seeking permission to leave the room. These bidders are regarded with disdain by the cognoscenti. (I must confess right now that this is how I bid. I

hope you will not move to a seat away from me and withdraw, so to speak, the hem of your garment upon noting this sign of amateurism.)

Still another method of bidding is used by Mr. Annahaf. He is a dealer interested primarily in bargains. He slouches sleepily in his chair when the bidding soars on some choice lot. The next lot comes up:

"Lot number 58, the two cent black, I have only five dollars, five, five dollars, very cheap, gentlemen, for this stamp . . ."

Mr. Annahaf is galvanized into action. He leans forward to examine the stamp.

"No bids, gentlemen? Sold at five dollars . . ."

"An' a haf," says Mr. Annahaf.

"Five-fifty. I have five dollars and a half. Six dollars . . ."

Mr. Annahaf turns to stare at the rear of the room from whence issued the new bid. His look combines profound disbelief and deep injury.

"Six dollars, six dollars I have . . ."

"An' a haf."

"Six-fifty, six-fifty, going at six and a half dollars.

(Pause) Sold to ANA for six dollars and fifty cents."

Mr. Annahaf settles back in his chair with an air of justification.

Before we pass on to the next lot, we can learn something from Mr. Annahaf. He or someone like him is present at almost every auction. He waits patiently for a good buy. If you are bidding by mail and send in dirt cheap bids on certain lots which happen to be high on the book, these lots will probably be picked off on the floor at a slight advance over your figures. I have found that one rarely gets a great bargain on a mail bid—it is too tempting to others when the lot is called out on the floor. If you really want a certain lot and are bidding by mail, put a fair figure on it—provided you trust the auctioneer.

Back to the bidding! We have reached the U. S. Columbian issue.

"Lot number 92, the one dollar, five, twenty dollars. Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three. Twenty-three, twenty-three, at twenty-three dollars. Sold to GH for twenty-three dollars."

There is little humor during an auction, but there is some. For an unknown reason the bidder designated as GH gets a certain amount of kidding from his fellow dealers. The announcement "—sold to GH" is often greeted from the rear of the room by a sotto voce chant, "He kno-o-ows." GH is unappreciative of this tribute to his expertness and shows it by a disapproving stare.

Why are bidders usually designated by initials rather than names? Apparently there are several reasons. Some collectors prefer anonymity. Dealers do not like to reveal their source of supply, especially when one of their customers may be in the same room. Furthermore, as Mr. Fiction has said, it helps the auctioneer avoid mispronunciation of names. I don't give a rap, myself, but for this auction I am resigned to being "JHR," and you Gentle Reader, might as well get used to being "GR."

We are approaching the lots that we examined the other day. The \$3 Columbian, remember? I do not know about you, but I feel a growing sense of tension as the auction nears a lot on which I plan to bid. Here it comes!

"Lot number 100, the \$3 Columbian, very fine. I have \$120 ("ouch"—my remark) 120, 120—a beautiful stamp, gentlemen, 120. Sold to order at \$120."

Disappointment floods in. Several bids of over catalog value had been mailed in. These fully reflected the value of a stamp even in this excellent condition. The floor bidding never got started, and Mr. Fiction has wasted little time over it. The stamp is probably destined to join a first rate collection whose owner does not have to worry too much over what he spends. Oh well, the next lot is coming up.

"Lot number 101, another \$3 Columbian. \$65 to start . . ."

(Up goes our hand) "\$70."

"I have \$75."

(Our hand is still up) "80."

"\$85" (Oh dear, there is another floor bidder.)

"90" (this is our top bid. Our budget is already \$10 overdrawn.)

"95"—Mr. Fiction turns toward us—"95, 95, do I hear 100?" I shake my head in sorrow. Then a very nice thing happens. Mr. Fiction gives us one of his rare smiles. He conveys to us his sympathy and his knowledge that we wanted that stamp badly. He seems to understand that we have been defeated not by lack of enthusiasm but by the heavier purses around us.

"95, 95 at \$95. Sold to LJ for \$95."

Well, there it is. The stamp is gone. We failed. At this point the worst thing we could do would be to buy the regummed job in the next lot for \$65. There will be other sales. Similar copies of this stamp will be offered. Maybe we will be richer then.

At this point there is a slight disruption in the proceedings. Mr. Lately has arrived. Mr. Lately seems unable to get to an auction on time. He endeavors to make up for a half an hour's lapse by a burst of speed from the elevator door to the auction room. As a result his chubby little figure comes cannonballing into the room. He takes one of the few empty chairs—but then another problem becomes apparent. He has not inspected all of the lots on which he might bid. Consequently he has to keep bobbing up and down as the individual lots are shown.

Let me now take a look at Henry Hoe, the buyers' agent. He seems to be doing a lot of bidding.

"Lot number 173, the Graf Zeppelins, very fine. I have one hundred dollars."

(Hoe flicks his finger) "105."

(EF nods) "110."

(Hoe) "115."

(nod) "120."

(flick) "125"

(nod) "130"

(flick) "135"

"135, 135 I have \$135. Any more? Sold to HH at \$135."

Mr. Hoe speaks up: "Make that \$140 sold to H — 2."

What's this? He bought the set for \$135 and now wants to pay \$5 more for it! The answer is that he has bids on this lot from two customers, one at \$135 and the other at \$150. If the stamp sells at \$135 he is in a dilemma as to which customer gets it. The loser would never be satisfied. He cannot get the two buyers together to flip a coin because one is in London and the other in Los Angeles. At the same time I wonder whether it would not be profitable for Mr. Hoe's customers all to agree that in this situation Mr. Hoe could do the coin flipping. The result would average out to a saving for all. I suppose some collectors want a particular stamp so badly that they would not agree to this. Still I wonder. Just the other day I saw a specialized lot of covers go to a buyers' agent for \$35. The successful bidder sighed.

"Make that \$110," he said unhappily.

"If you insist," said the auctioneer.

It is interesting to watch the auctioneer's technique in handling the sale of a popular lot on which there are several bidders. Such a lot is now being sold. It has four floor bidders. Mr. Fiction is not disturbed. He watches only TWO of them. It is not until one of these two drops out that he scans the room for signs of other bids.

In the rare case where an auctioneer missed a bidding signal, the over-

looked party promptly calls out in agony when the lot is announced as being sold to another. If this is done promptly and before the sale of the next lot begins, Mr. Fiction will apologize and reopen the bidding. It will not happen often—maybe five times all afternoon.

How have you been doing on the lots you marked? I am glad you got some of them. I managed to pick up a set of U. S. with Shanghai surcharges at about 40% of catalog. Some have hinge marks or microscopic thins, but they are generally fine to very fine and will be comfortable in my collection. I have gotten little else. There are too many bidders. There will be no real bargains today.

About once a year I manage to hit the closing minutes of an auction and find only half a dozen bidders in attendance. Bidding is sluggish and most lots are sold at one advance over the bid on the book. To a collector, this is like finding gold. He will probably be bidding against dealers only. They usually figure on a 30% mark-up when they resell the stamps. Thus a collector can pick up stamps for at least a 25% discount from retail prices—unless a particular lot has a powerhouse bid on the book. Last winter I dropped into Fiction's late one miserable snowy afternoon and found such a situation. Before the auction ended I picked up a very fine Great Britain Edward 10 shilling mint (cat. \$32.50) for \$9.50 and the Edward pound mint (cat. \$40) for \$13.50. Stamps in similar condition normally bring half catalog or better.

No hope of anything like that today. Shall we go now? We'll stop at a counter near the elevator and pick up the lots we bought.

It's been quite an afternoon. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. I'll have to leave you here—it really has been fun. Come back soon. We'll have further adventures in stamp buying.

What's that? You say you know my secret? You say that I enjoy the people and the items of human interest at an auction as much as I do the stamps? I confess. It's true. I just hope that in reading these pages you will too.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

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NEW MEMBER

- 738 Gösta Hedbom, Börjesonsvägen 24, Bromma, Sweden.

BRANCH MEETINGS

The New York Branch meets every third Friday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Collectors Club, 22 East 35th St., New York City.

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THE 2.50 KCS STAMP DEPICTING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN PRAGUE

By Zdeněk Kvasnička

Translated by J. J. Verner

In 1928-29 the prevailing opinion at the Ministry of Posts in Prague was that the way to create beautiful stamps was to copy a picture or photograph and add a border and the necessary value numbers. After the successful anniversary issue of 1928, a series of small format stamps were issued with scenic motives. These cannot be included among the best examples of Czechoslovak stamp designing.



Fig. 1

In Figure 1 we see an aquarelle done by the artist Šetelika, which was with certain corrections, the basis for the 2.50 Kčs stamp of the scenic series. This is the only stamp of all the stamps issued by Czechoslovakia of which the engraver is not known. The engraving is crude and without artistic feeling and was at one time attributed to a French engraver. However, we now suspect

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that the die was prepared by one of the engravers employed by the printing plant "Unie."

The color proofs (without value numbers) of this engraving (Figure 2) that have been preserved were actually trials of new deliveries of colored ink and were printed only on small sheets of postal paper.

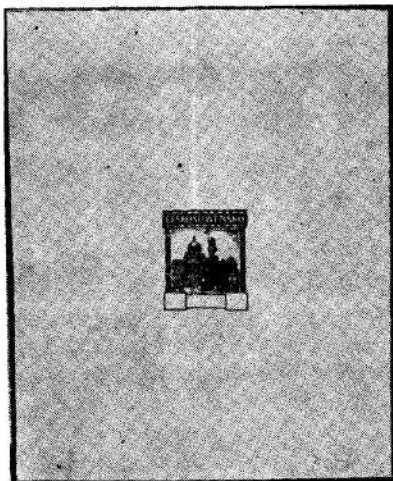


Fig. 2

NEW YORK BRANCH FEBRUARY MEETING

As always, there was a lively philatelic discussion at this meeting. The attendance was not very good, due to weather conditions. Members come from over 40 miles, like Horechny and from a shorter distance but also across the river, our other old member, Michaelson. Member Koplowitz showed his interesting pages on the production of a set of Croatia stamps, beginning with essays, through color trials and to the actual set. He also had a collection of Baltic States to present. A change from seeing only our specialty's stamps was very relaxing.

We were asked for information about Compex 1963 and a member informed us that the Chicago Branch will participate.

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