The curtained second-story windows of the Society’s first “central office” overlooked one of State College’s busiest downtown streets.

APS: The First Century

by Robert L.D. Davidson

A noted professor of history once commented that everything that has happened since 1900 is current events, not history. A somewhat similar point could be made about our chronicle of the American Philatelic Society in the years since 1965. The past two decades are fresh in the memories of many APS members, which makes them difficult to recount as history.

Nevertheless, the years between 1965 and 1985 were ones of great achievement and maturity, of exciting events and accomplishments. The years of leadership by APS presidents Edward Willard and Dan Vooyis are worthy of note. The former was a distinguished lawyer, the latter a brilliant banker. Each was an avid philatelist, postal historian, and collector of philatelic literature. After completing their terms of of-

The first American Philatelic Building was begun during President Willard’s term of office and dedicated in 1972. With its growing membership and ever-expanding services, the Society outgrew it in less than a decade.

Dedicated in 1982, the new headquarters building on its five-acre site provides the APS with a beautiful as well as an efficient physical plant from which to serve the Society’s members. Like the first American Philatelic Building, this one too is owned by the American Philatelic Research Library, which rents space to the American Philatelic Society.
office, both continued to serve the Society. Their successors, too, were men of ability. During the years under Emerson Clark (1973–77), John Foxworth (1977–81), and Bill Bauer (1981–85), the Society continued to grow, then to consolidate its gains. Current incumbent Bud Sellers has more than twenty-five years’ experience in APS work. His philatelic career has included terms as president of the Collectors Club of New York and of the American Philatelic Congress — a further indication that we still have good fortune in leaders.

Dan Voovs was a particularly active and enthusiastic member of the Society. He served as director and treasurer, as well as in other positions, before his election as APS president. Voovs had been organizer and long-time president of the Philatelic Literature Society and had edited the Review, that group’s publication. He was a leader in promoting the establishment of the American Philatelic Research Library, of which he was an original incorporator and a founding member. His own library provided a substantial portion of the APRL’s original holdings.

Early in his presidency, he appointed a committee of three who had been or were Society attorneys to review and, if necessary, revise the APS by-laws. The ever-willing George Martin, along with Willard and Gene Tinsley, began this arduous task.

The Society’s membership continued to surge, rising in quick stages to 30,000 by the end of Voovs’ term. In April 1974, the Sales Division reported some $400,000 in sales, with a net value of material in circulation of more than $1.5 million. The treasury was almost always in the black, and our permanent funds reached more than a quarter of a million dollars.

Innovations continued: Junior philately was given increased emphasis, the Champion of Champions competition was made an annual event, large national shows continued to be supported, and the APS played a more vigorous role in the FIP. A joint expertizing service was organized with the American Stamp Dealers’ Association.

The first “World Series of Philately” competition, as the renamed Champion of Champions event was called, took place in Rochester in 1968. Robert Cunliffe was the first winner. As we know, it continues to be held, and is a feature of every annual meeting and exhibition.

Over the years, the amount and number of thefts of philatelic material — both from collections and from dealers’ stocks — became a great concern. Maryette Lane and her committee provided a great service in alerting members to the dangers. Many useful suggestions were offered and recommendations made. In recent years, James H. Beal, like Mrs Lane once a victim of philatelic theft, succeeded as chairman of the Stamp Theft Committee.

In November 1971, at the AMPHILEX show in New York celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Collectors Club, the Society maintained a booth for members and guests. But news of the death of Lester Brookman saddened the group.

Brookman was one of a number of the hobby’s leaders to die in this era. Don Lybarger, Ed Conger, Henry Godkind, Anna and Paul Plant, Edith Faulstich, Barney Davis, Sol Glass, and Elliott Perry, the last of the “Big Three” among U.S. scholars — Chase, Ashbrook, and Perry — all closed their albums. In a brief history such as this, we cannot do justice to the contributions that so many such members have made to our Society — as officers, editors, authors, or simply as volunteers on a host of special projects and committees.

During this period, Bud Sellers was taking a firm grip on the organization of the Speakers Bureau, and Bud Hennig was effectively developing a program for the accreditation of judges.

About this time, some members were accusing the APS “official family” of playing “musical chairs” with the various offices. Although there was some evidence of this, the situation arose then, as it occasionally still does, more from a lack of alternative candidates than for any other reason. Voovs hoped to overcome this accusation by encouraging fresh candidates to run.

The contest for the office of director-at-large in 1971 was a close one, with five candidates vying for three positions. I was privileged to be elected, along with George Turner and Lois Evans; all regretted the defeat of Maryette Lane and Kenneth DeLisle by small margins. (At the conclusion of my term, I served for several years on the APRL Board of Trustees, of which I was president in 1978–79.)

Among the interesting events of this era was the 1970 convention in Honolulu. This was an exotic and memorable experience for “mainlanders.” True, meetings had been held in Canada and Mexico, and the 1942 meeting might well have been held in Cuba, but a throng of members attended this Hawaii convention and it was a rare

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social as well as philatelic experience.

In the AP at this time, Dick Graham was continuing his contributions to the "Classics Corner," and Susan McDonald, Joe Foley, Dave Jarrett, Horace Harrison, and other new authors appeared on the scene.

Construction of the APRL building, begun during Willard’s term, was completed in 1972, and the headquarters and the now quite extensive library moved in, with many members attending the dedication and opening.

It must be remembered that funds for this building were to come from membership, with $225,000 as the goal. Willard named me chairman of the fund-raising committee (possibly because a college president should be able to raise money?), and a program was under way. The money came in in amounts ranging from $5,000 to $5 and, by the end of Vooyos' term, the goal was within reach.

During this time, dues were finally raised, to $7. Interestingly, the proposal carried easily, despite previous opposition. Willard arranged for the transfer of the Boston University Philatelic Collection to the APRL. Dave Lidman received a gold medal for unusual and outstanding service to the APS, a medal awarded only once before, to Don Lybarger. Charles Peterson was named editor of the Philatelic Literature Review, a position he held until 1985. He succeeded Vooyos when the latter became APS president.

More than 500 stamp clubs now were members of the APS. The Yucatan Affair, the story of de Thouin and his counterfeiters, was published by the Society in a cooperative effort by many experts who assisted editors Jim Chemi, Jim Beal, and Jim DeVoss. The great inflation began, leading for some seven years to an artificial increase in prices.

Ned Willard became president of the APRL Board of Trustees, succeeding Vooyos, who was the first in that role. A series of librarians labored to turn the facility into a "real" library. Joseph M. Sousa was followed by Nancie Hall, Frank Sente, Lois Evans, Steven Pla, and Gini Horn, the current librarian. Sente now is the Society's director of administration; Evans is the Society's elected secretary.

Willard died in May 1973, leaving a great legacy in the library, as well as in his definitive two-volume work on the U.S. 2-cent red-brown of 1883-84.

In this busy time, the Society continued to be blessed with leadership and support that helped it grow into the foremost philatelic society in the world.

From 1973 to 1985, the administrations of Clark, Foxworth, and Bauer were marked by continuing expansion in membership and services. They were an exciting twelve years.

Membership soared from about 32,000 in 1973 to 52,000 in 1985. Executive Director Keith Wagner reported at the end of 1985 that we are retaining about ninety-five percent, indeed a splendid record, although we need to remember that changes in the economy sometimes cause considerable fluctuations. We have more than 2,600 life members and many regular members who have been affiliated with the Society for thirty and forty years or more.

Wagner was selected in 1980 to succeed Jim DeVoss as executive director on the conse-}

George Turner served the APS in many ways over the years, most recently by giving us all a glimpse of the Society's past: Many of the convention souvenirs pictured throughout the year with "APS: The First Century" were donated to the APRL by Mr. Turner.

latter's retirement. Col. Wagner was staff judge advocate of the U.S. Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, at the time he ended his twenty-six-year career to become executive director of the Society.

If we divide the three administrations, we would have to mention as the principal achievement of Clark's presidency INTERPHIL; of Foxworth's, COPO; and of Bauer's, the second American Philatelic Building. All three leaders saw the Sales Division grow; in one year, 1979, sales reached $1.5 million.

The relationship with The Pennsylvania State University, which includes corres-
headquarters building meant that some expansion of the facility was inevitable. But a lengthy study showed that expansion of the existing structure wasn’t the answer.

At Boston in 1979, the boards of the APS and the APRL, meeting together, agreed that a completely new building was going to be required and authorized the APRL to purchase a five-acre site just north of State College. At the next STAmpSHOW, another joint meeting was held and the boards agreed to start the new building. Architects were employed, and fund-raising was begun. The APRL would own the new building, as it had the first structure, and would rent space to the APS.

Three years later, on April 24, 1982, the new and splendid headquarters building was dedicated. The members who have seen it can attest to its efficiency and beauty. We all can take pride in having such a magnificent home for our Society.

The death of Jim Chemi in March 1976 was a great loss. He had brought the AP to new heights, enlarging its size, obtaining much greater advertising support, and improving the number and quality of articles. He was a loyal and enthusiastic officer of this Society, and we owe him much.

The nine-year tenure of his successor, Richard L. Sine, was marked by major changes in the AP, including the addition of color. He started a “Question & Answer” column which yet flourishes. Unfortunately, the Stowell Co. in Federalsburg, Maryland, which had printed and distributed the AP for more than fifty years, could not produce the new format and a new printer took over.

Bill Welch became AP editor after Sine left to join Scott publications in 1985. At the end of the year, Welch also became editor of the Philatelic Literature Review, following Charlie Peterson’s impressive tenure in that post. As a member of the APS Education Committee, Welch had helped to set up the Penn State correspondence courses in philately as well as the Summer Seminar on Philately, for which he has been a faculty member since its inception. He is a founding member of the APRL.

Early in 1979, Foxworth began a movement that echoed the concept of the long-dormant American Academy of Philately, gathering representatives from a dozen or more of the most prominent philatelic organizations into what was to become COPO, the Council of Philatelic Organizations. Among the original conferees were the American Academy, the American Philatelic Congress, the APS, the APRL, the American Stamp Dealers’ Association, the American Topical Association, the Bureau Issues Association, the Collectors Club of New York, the Philatelic Foundation, and the Society of Philatelic Americans. Other organizations were invited to participate, and COPO was incorporated.

It is too early to assess the value of this movement, but it certainly has goals that cannot but help the whole realm of philately. More than 400 national, regional, and local stamp clubs affiliated. Representatives of some of those groups make up a board of directors.

As the end of this history approaches, a quotation from John Foxworth’s swan song in 1981 is appropriate: “The future of the Society never has been brighter. The

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**The Official Journal**

Several publications have been designated as the official journal of the American Philatelic Society in the course of our 100-year history. Here’s the chronicle:

- **1887:** January–June
- 1888–1892
- **1893–June 1895**
- **July 1895–1896**
- **1897–1901**
- **1902–1909**
- **1910–present**

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Col. DeVoss presents a plaque commemorating the dedication of the new American Philatelic Building to Bernard “Bud” Hennig (left), one of the men responsible for the Society’s accreditation program for philatelic judges.

APS is recognized as the worldwide leader of philately, and this leadership will continue as new policies are carried forward and innovative ideas and services are developed by the new administration.

**Postscript**

The author has been a member of the APS since 1945 and a life member since 1967. I have attended thirteen annual and five spring conventions. I have been elected to office, and I was a founding member of the APRL and president of its board. The Society honored me with the Luff Award. In all, I have never thought philately or the APS owed me a thing. My collecting and my pleasant associations, my exhibition awards, and my close friendships are all I ever desired. I felt that I owed something to philately.

So this history is my humble attempt to repay the debt. I am privileged to have known Don Lybarger, Hiram Deats, Ned Willard, Dan Vooy, David Lidman, and many others now deceased. I wish I might have known other giants of our history: John Tiffany, John Luff, J.W. Scott, August Wilhelm, Clarence Hennan, Carroll Chase, Uncle Billy Stone, and so many others who made significant contributions before closing their albums.

And there are many living stars still on our stage. I hesitate to mention one for fear of omitting others equally deserving.

Leadership has been the key to our success. That, and a loyal membership. I agree with John Foxworth—nothing can stop us.

Perhaps this benediction, offered at one of our annual dinners (in Los Angeles in 1965), will provide a fitting conclusion. It was given by the Rev. Marion Douglas, OFM.

Dear God, the Author and Beginning of all communication, we pause to ask Your blessing on this gathering.

As the Author of communications, You sent us a message of salvation and peace through Your Sacred Scriptures. As philatelists we note that this was a stamless cover and sent postage free.

Robert L.D. Davidson, author of “APS: The First Century,” has earned our thanks and congratulations.

When we, in turn, wish to communicate with You, we are grateful for our franking privilege. No stamps are required, no ZIP Code, no forms to fill out, no limits on size and weight or time. Everything is free.

Make us more aware of this privilege of communicating with You, and let us use it often to keep clear in our own minds the Good News of peace so that we may be able to send it on to others. May our words to others be like Yours, full of understanding and concern.

In this special group, we ask in particular for two things: First that our country may find men today who have the spirit and leadership of the father of our country whom we are honoring. Second, may all men come to have that special kind of human trust that is found among all collectors.

Bless all who are in this show, and those who will attend. Bless the accumulator, bless the collector, bless the specialist, bless the dealer. Bless our browsing, and may it be in the spirit of fun and fellowship and respect for Your Name. Like all good occupations of mankind, may stamp collecting make us better men, willing to communicate Your goodness to each other. Amen.

**Corrections**

Two errors we’ve noted in the course of this long-running history should be corrected.

On Page 324 of the April AP, The Metropolitan Philatelist was described as the journal of the Metropolitan Philatelic Society. It was not. It was a J.W. Scott publication that carried some news of philatelic societies, but it was not any group’s official journal.

A passage quoted on Page 468 of the May AP that supposedly described the Society’s Silver Anniversary celebration was, in fact, a description of the Silver Jubilee of the Swedish Philatelic Federation published in the November 1911 issue of The American Philatelist.