APS: The First Century

by Robert L.D. Davidson

The Lybarger Years

The 1943 election of Donald Lybarger as president of the APS and the ferment created by his 1942 speech seem to have begun a whole new era in the history of the APS.

Even though it was war-time, membership in the Society started to rise, again surpassing 5,000 by January 1944. The number of members actively participating in APS affairs and projects seemingly increased, as did both their enthusiasm and the results they obtained.

The AP was becoming more and more a splendid philatelic journal. Ashbrook’s articles continued, and the explosive arguments over the 1861 premieres gravures now brought in Clarence Brazer to add another point of view to the Perry-Ashbrook debate. Lybarger began a “President’s Page” in the journal, which was to be a continuing contribution to informing the membership. This grand idea has prevailed during the subsequent years. Herman Herst Jr. began writing for the AP with “What Happened before 1840.”

Max Ohlman of New York was chairman of the Stamp Trade Effort for the Red Cross, which had a $2,500 goal. The list of APS members in the armed services was growing longer and included Maj. Carter Glass Jr., Justin Bacharach, and Lt. Sherman Rogers, USNR, along with many other familiar names.

Milwaukee was chosen as the site of the next annual convention, and preparations went forward within the framework of war-time restrictions.

The AP continued to be curtailed in size because of paper shortages, and the amount of advertising increased so much that some excellent articles had to be postponed.

Eugene Klein died in March 1944 and was eulogized by Lybarger. The American Philatelic Congress, which Klein had organized and of which he was president until his death, was a “going” concern, and was given considerable attention in the AP. The Congress’ tenth meeting was held in New York that year.

Lybarger was released from active duty in the service and resumed his place on the Cleveland bench. He found time to visit many chapter meetings in the general area from Buffalo to Canton. Wherever he went, he preached the evils of the proxy system and the need for total reorganization of the APS.

The Society now had a record number of 108 chapters, most of them active. The AP published the program of the Philadelphia club during these days, to illustrate how good chapters conducted their programs. As reported in the AP:

Philadelphia Chapter No. 18.

The chapter has enjoyed an exceptionally fine year. Meetings were held every second Wednesday of the month from Oct. to June at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia’s leading hostelry. The chapter has an active dues paying membership of 56 members, and many others who visit from time to time.

The program for the past year has been widely varied and particularly appealed to all stamp collectors. The list of exhibitors follows:

October, Fred L. Noll — Offset Printing, types of 1917–19.

November, Philip H. Ward, Jr. — Selected U.S. Stamps.

December, Henry F. Heuer — Stamps of Haiti.

February, Eugene Klein — Hungary and its philatelic aspects.
April, Dr. H.E. Radasch — History of Air Mail.
May, Wm. A. Edgar — Early Stamps of Great Britain.
June, James Baxter — Printing from offset plates; Jere Hess Barr — Rare foreign covers.

On Friday morning, August 18, 1944, in Milwaukee, with President Lybarger in the chair, a series of important actions were taken.

The by-laws were changed to permit their amendment by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present in person or represented by proxy, provided, however, that such affirmative vote would constitute at least one-third of the membership of the Society.

With this new proviso and at least one-third of the active membership present or represented by proxy, these key changes were made:

— The Board of Directors was authorized to choose the site for the annual conventions and to assume part of the cost of these occasions.

— A central office was to be established, to be in operation not later than April 15, 1945. This new endeavor and its location were given to the Board of Directors to act upon. The new executive secretary, who was to displace and perform most of the duties of the treasurer and the former secretary, was given a considerable task.

As head of the new office, he was to be responsible for maintaining a repository of official documents and correspondence, as well as membership records; for collecting dues; and for editing official notices for publication in the AP. He was to furnish all members with copies of the by-laws and the charter and, annually, with a directory.

In general, he was to assume responsibility for the operation of the Society.

The elected treasurer of the Society thus became responsible only for advising the executive secretary and for the permanent funds of the Society. Salaries were to be set by the Board of Directors, and official expenses were also to be determined by the board.

Then, proxies were abolished. A majority of the members present at an annual convention, when twenty-five or more were present, was to be considered a quorum for the conduct of business. And a new method for amending the by-laws was adopted that required a mail vote by the entire membership, after thorough publicity in the AP.

The convention was not through. It recognized the first woman vice president, Dorothy McEntee, and invited her to preside at one of the sessions, and it voted to establish a “Stamp Room” at Princeton University.

Dues were waived for members in the armed services. The verbatim “Proceedings” of the conventions were abandoned and, instead, meeting reports were to be published in condensed form in the AP, as is done today. The purchase of war bonds with some of the Society’s investments was authorized, and a standardized “conduct” of chapter exhibitions was adopted.

In little more than one year, Don Lybarger had moved the Society in a manner no one could have envisioned as possible a mere two years earlier. Of course, many enthusiastic members had been part of the changes, but Lybarger lit the fuse. He should be remembered for bringing the APS into the modern world, and for saving it from its own backwardness.

A total of 231 members and 146 guests were at Milwaukee, surely a magnificent showing with the war still raging. Most of the well-known dealers and collectors attended, and the Milwaukee club did a wonderful job of entertaining in so difficult a period.

Winners of the various exhibition awards included such members as Lindquist, Brazer, Hennan, Lybarger, Johl, Weatherly, Barkhausen, Sol Glass, Shoemaker, Narona, Lagerloef, Rich, Meroni, Charless Hahn, Burleigh Jacobs, and Fishel. And everyone agreed that, conditions permitting, they would meet again in 1945.

The October 1944 AP carried a full-page advertisement for an “Executive Secretary,” outlining the responsibilities and prerequisites of the job. A salary of $3,000 plus expenses was offered. The same issue reported Society membership at 5,635 and carried news of the death of John Murray Bartels, the great authority on U.S. postal stationery. Ernest Kehr of New York took over the “Stamps for the Wounded” campaign, and member Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a contribution of stamps.

In December, after much deliberation, the APS board, meeting in Philadelphia in conjunction with a convention of the American Philatelic Congress, located the

Dorothy B. McEntee, the Society’s first woman vice president, took office in Milwaukee in 1944.

The Society advertised in the October 1944 issue of the AP for an individual to head its new central office.

H. Clay Mussel, first executive secretary of the APS, opened the Society’s central office in State College, Pennsylvania, on April 1, 1945.

The American Philatelist
Society’s new central office in State College, Pennsylvania, where it has remained since. At the time, State College, situated almost precisely in the center of the state, was a small town. Today it is a small city. The Pennsylvania State College there is known today as The Pennsylvania State University, one of the nation’s largest educational institutions.

H. Clay Musser, a long-time member of the fiscal staff of the college, was appointed executive secretary of the APS. Musser, APS No. 7080, was an active philatelist, and he had attended a number of the annual conventions.

With the new central office in operation and the position of executive secretary filled, two loyal and veteran officers of many years, Secretary H.A. Davis and Treasurer H.H. Elliott, were relieved of most of their duties, with the grateful thanks of the president and the Society they had served so well. Davis went to State College to effect an orderly transition, and the new permanent office was open and operating by April 1, 1945. The post office box number was 800, familiar to many for years.

During the war, Allied troops were often approached by citizens of occupied nations anxious to sell their stamps for much-needed cash. Editor Brookman warned soldiers to be careful: “Unless you are skilled in detecting repaired stamps, forgeries, fake covers, fake cancellations, etc., leave stamps alone.” And don’t forget, he warned, if you are buying the residue of occupied or deserted post offices, many of your counterparts are doing likewise, so such material will be worth very little when you return home.

With the war still raging in Europe and the Pacific, APS membership went over 6,000, an increase of thirty-eight percent in two years. The new central office and Lybarger’s enthusiastic leadership, abetted by Brookman’s solid AP, all aided this rapid growth.

A number of familiar names appeared as new members: George Martin, later to become long-time Society attorney; John Baker; John Pope; Leon Forchheimer; William Fox; Jack Molesworth; Larry Davidson; and Ernest Kehr, the active head of “Stamps for the Wounded.” Articles by Earl Antrum, George Malpass, and George Hahn appeared in the AP.

It was noted with sadness that Dr. Adolph Luthi, U.S. Medical Corps, and E.L. Westover were killed in action in Germany. More names appeared on the “Service List,” including Morris Everett and Larry Davidson. Clair Trevor, siren of the silver screen, was pictured in the AP as a regular contributor of stamps for the wounded.

In May 1945, it appeared that the Office of Defense Transportation would make it impossible for the Society to convene in Newark, New Jersey, in August as scheduled. So President Lybarger called a meeting of the Board of Directors, with the Essex Stamp Club and such regional members as could attend, to conduct the business of the Society during this awkward time. Also in May 1945, President Lybarger wrote a poignant obituary for Franklin D. Roosevelt, extolled as a real collector and a member of the Society for a dozen years or more.

In March 1945, a group of seven well-known collectors from New York met at the University Club in that city and completed arrangements for the formal launching of the Philatelic Foundation, which was to become a strong force for good in the philatelic world. Practically all were members of the APS and included such familiar names as Hugh Clark, Alfred Lichtenstein, Harry Lindquist, and Theodore Steinway. The purpose of the Foundation was promotional, and to establish reference collections that could assist in expertizing.

During the year, the Association for Stamp Exhibitions organized a strong committee, again composed almost entirely of members of the APS, to plan for the 1947 centennial of U.S. stamps, to be celebrated

APS member Theodore Steinway, better known for his pianos than for his collecting interests.
in conjunction with an international exhibition. Once more, the names were familiar: Lichtenstein, Hall, Klemann, Steinway, Brazer, Sol Glass, Newbury, Rich, Sanabria, Sloane, and Wilhelm were among the leaders.

Percy Doane and Vahan Mozian died in 1945.

The meeting of the “skeleton convention” of 1945 had nothing but good reports. Membership was up, assets totaled more than $80,000, Lybarger and the Baltimore vice presidents were re-elected almost unanimously, and a new secretary, Wilbur Cannon, succeeded Dr. Davis, who retired from the post that had become less important with the advent of the executive secretary. Seventy-five members attended a dinner chaired by Van Dyk MacBride, at which Hiram Deats recalled that he had been chairman of the exhibition committee at the 1888 convention — fifty-seven years earlier!

In the next few years, immediately after the war’s end, philately seemed to take off. In one year, the APS gained 2,000 new members, boosting total membership to more than 8,000. Many of these new members doubtless were veterans who caught the collecting bug while in the service, or perhaps they were simply men and women who previously had not known about the Society and the services it offered philatelists. During this period, Lester Brookman used the AP to maintain constant pressure on members to recruit new members.

During the mid-1940s, additional soon-to-be-famous philatelic names appeared in the AP. Among them were Hugh Baker, George Blizil, Scott Polland, Larry Shenefield, Winthrop Boggs, Henry Goodkind, Donald Steele, George Hargest, David Kohn, Charles Wunsch, James Sher, and Jim DeVoss.

The central office was functioning well on the second floor of a commercial building in downtown State College. Musser took his new responsibilities in stride and, as the Society grew rapidly, it was apparent that the new arrangement would be efficient and successful. In September 1946, the APS could claim 121 chapters and about $110,000 in funds.

In July, a much decorated Col. Ralph Kimble, now retired from active duty, reassumed the editorship of the AP, showering much gratitude on interim editor Brookman for his great work. The latter, a Minneapolis dealer and writer, heaved a great sigh of relief. He retained a leading role in the continuing successful campaign for new members, and his name would be constantly before the APS until his death in 1980. Brookman’s exhaustive study of U.S. nineteenth-century stamps, first in two volumes and later in three, is still the authoritative work in this field.

In one of his last editorials, Brookman observed:

A survey of the stamp market indicates that the following situation exists: The market is exceedingly strong in the stamps of the United States, Canada, British Colonials and the choice early stamps and commemoratives of nearly every country with about the only exceptions in this later class (commemoratives) being most of the stamps of Germany and the countries that were occupied by the Nazis. As expected by most experienced collectors and dealers, many of the war issues of the occupied countries are now being sold at prices that are considerably lower than those at which the stamps were offered a year or so ago. Shed no tears for the purchasers, who consisted not only of collectors but of dealers and wholesalers as well, for they have all demonstrated, again and again, their ability to take an occasional loss.

The chief beneficiaries in the matter are Europeans — to whom we have demonstrated again and again — (pronounce with the long a please) — that we have earned and paid for the right to be called Uncle Santa Claus. However, and this would be poetic justice, the tables may very well be turned someday so far as the prices of stamps are concerned. With the coming of further inflation, which I hold to be inevitable, the prices of these stamps should again rise and prices may yet catch up to those at which some of the war issues have been sold.

An examination of the AP during these years shows that prices were starting to soar; the post-war inflation was to make wealthy men of some dealers and collectors. Collectors were warned not to buy some foreign new issues, because they were “too tightly controlled by some dealers here.” The number of stamp auctions bullooed also, and advertising in the AP reflected this new day for philately.

Nicholas Sanabria, the leader of air mail collecting and the founder of the famous catalogue bearing his name, died in this year.

The upcoming sixtieth annual convention and sixtieth anniversary meeting
Harmer had become editor of the catalogue and believed it high time to "give the classic first issues ... fitting catalogue numbers."

When the Chicago convention met in 1946, President Lybarger could be pleased with the attendance — 287 members and 150 guests from all over the country. The pent-up philatelic enthusiasm of the war years exploded with this post-war opportunity, and much of merit was transacted. Accolades given at the meeting included Luff Awards to Brookman, Brazer, and David E. Johnson, and election of Bartels and Doane to the Hall of Fame.

With this sixtieth convention, the publishing of handbooks was assigned to the Board of Directors, with a committee (the forerunner of the Literature Committee) to advise on selection and possible market. State and regional chapters were authorized. The Chicago club was, for the fifth time, a genial and helpful host. A directory was ordered published.

In November 1946, Kimball quoted an editorial by Maj. Homer Diman from his "Mid City Newsletter," a house organ:

We mentioned previously the lads who write for the papers. Let's try that subject. Seems to us that of late everyone who is in philately is mad at someone else. Every time we look at a stamp magazine or newspaper we find columns saying — "don't use cellulose acetate stamp mounts," "Use cellulose acetate stamp mounts," "Don't collect gum," "Do collect gum," "Don't speculate," "Do speculate," "Do this — Don't do that." Frankly it's a wonder to us that from the recent trend of stamp writing most collectors, speculators — or whatever you want to call them — aren't more than slightly neurotic. Why in Heaven's name don't

stamp writers realize that the vast majority of serious collectors are not complete idiots — that they have minds of their own — and regardless of a million do's or don'ts they are going to do just as they please anyway?

Another thing — we've noticed any number of paid advertisements that are almost downright insulting. Both to philatelists and professionals. Why this should be we don't know. Some say we won't recognize you if you send a postcard — others say send post cards. What difference does it make — a postcard and a letter both get to the place to which they are addressed. Then we've noticed the ones that say only LEGITIMATE dealers handle our line of merchandise. Isn't that cute? Why not get out a blackjack to the dealers who don't handle that particular line. After all what is a legitimate dealer? According to our idea it's a person or firm who delivers good philatelic merchandise to fill the wants of buyers at the best possible price. That's our creed and we'll stick to it. At any rate our only gripe is this. It isn't necessary to insult people to be either a stamp columnist or a stamp dealer. Being a gentleman never did anyone a bit of harm — why not have a little more of it in philately? We have always considered ourselves as such and try our utmost to conduct our business in that manner.

The Denver club meeting of October 1946 presented to H.A. "Doc" Davis, for twenty-nine years the secretary of the APS, a hand-lettered memento created by the APS for the occasion. All of the current officers (including two former presidents, Hennan and Wilhelm) affixed their signatures. Davis was indeed a very senior member of the Society, attested to by his member number, 1925.

In January 1947, the AP published a long list of overseas members who had been placed on inactive status during the war and who could not now be located by the
executive secretary. The membership was asked to provide any help it possibly could to get those names back on the active roll. Addresses for the “lost” members ranged from Shanghai to South Africa, with most, of course, being in Western Europe.

The Centennial celebration in New York was a high-water mark for the APS. Officers of the Society gave a dinner at the Hotel Astor in honor of some of the visiting officials of foreign philatelic societies who came from France, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, Switzerland, El Salvador, and other countries. Almost twenty officers of the host society were present.

The Centennial exhibition was the first such exhibit that I ever attended, as one of the many thousands who saw this perfectly astounding display. The Steinways entertained at Steinway Hall, and the whole affair was a crowning victory for APS member Harry Lindquist, and for the APS in general. Winners at the exhibit included many members of the Society, and almost fifteen percent of the total membership called at the APS lounge!

Sadly, Alfred Lichtenstein died just before the great event into which he had put so much effort.

The postmaster general was congratulated on the attractive souvenir sheet and the special commemorative stamp issued for the occasion.

Later in 1947, the William C. Stone Cup was instituted to be awarded to the person who had done most to advance the interests of the Society.

The Pittsburgh convention in August 1947 heard that Society membership had increased more than 100 percent in just five years (1942-47), and that there were now some 10,000 APS members! Among this new group of members was a bumper crop of future leaders, among them Phil Silver, Douglas Patrick, Cy Thompson, Emerson Clark, F. Burton Sellers, Bernard Hennig, and Carl Rueter.

Lybarger’s last two years as APS president covered the Denver convention in 1948 and the Boston convention in 1949. Both meetings were heavily attended and gave assurance as to how well the new central office and the revised organizational structure were operating. At the 1949 gathering, the APS joined the Federation Internationale de Philatélie, which had been organized in 1930.

Two new directors — Ralph Bernays of California and Fred Jarrett of Ontario — and a new Board of Vice Presidents from the New Orleans area made up of Fred Billingsley, Douglas Watson, and Leonard Huber were elected.

The CIPEX celebration had a net surplus of $20,000, which was set aside for the next U.S. International. Winthrop Boggs published his Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada, an APS handbook that...
several major exhibitions were held and numerous issues of the NPM Bulletin were issued. This effort went a long way toward illustrating the need for a central building to house a library and for other similar purposes.

Pressure also was mounting for a program of stamp insurance. Some private companies offered such coverage, but it would be more than a decade before the APS plan was developed.

Lybarger’s six years as president of the APS were great ones, filled with excitement and change. His terms were filled with major achievements, from boosting Society membership to 11,500, to establishing a much-needed central office with a paid staff.

As president, Lybarger visited no fewer than thirty chapters, from Boston to New Orleans and from Richmond to Milwaukee. He is certainly one of the heroes of this history, and he should be remembered as a distinguished leader and reformer.

When former APS secretary Wilbur Cannon succeeded Lybarger as president of the Society, he had large shoes to fill. In his two terms (1949–53), the vigorous Cannon visited many chapters, enthusiastically tried to increase the membership, and did his best to keep APS committees busy.

Membership hovered around 11,000. The Society may have been growing in prestige, but in membership it did not.

In his first term, Cannon had a Board of Vice Presidents from the Milwaukee area that included future president Burleigh Jacobs. In his second term, he had a Philadelphia group that included Earl P.L. Apfelbaum, who served the APS for many years, later becoming secretary of the Society.

Cannon disagreed with Kimble’s policies in the AP, he wanted more Society news, personals, chapter information, and the like. Kimble, who had made the AP a first-class philatelic journal, resigned in November 1951, and David Lidman, a newspaperman of wide repute and a former Luff Award winner, assumed the editorship.

Lidman, who aided the Society in many roles for many years, succeeded in satisfying Cannon and other leaders by offering the information they wanted to see, while continuing to publish important research articles. This approach has been followed by subsequent editors.

During Cannon’s administration, the APS joined the National Federation of Stamp Clubs, which had been founded in 1934. There seemed to be a revival of interest in local and state societies, and this affiliation was made with that in mind.

The annual APS convention in Washington in 1950 was well-attended. International Secretary Jim DeVoss sent leis from Hawaii, where he was stationed.

At the Toronto meeting the following year, Cannon was re-elected for a second term. Another large attendance was noted, and the business of oiling the Society’s machinery continued. The APS faced few setbacks; the failure to build membership was the only stumbling block.

A highlight of the Cannon years was the 1952 convention in Philadelphia. At that time, the National Philatelic Museum was
A souvenir of the 1952 APS convention in Philadelphia pictured the National Philatelic Museum in that city.

at its peak and the Philatelic Institute of Temple University was operating. I was dean of the institute, and I recall chairing a symposium on philatelic writing that included George Caldwell, Van Dyk McBridge, and Professor John Feehaer, a philatelist in the English Department of the university. Caldwell was a noted Swiss collector and authority. There were other important symposia, including one that featured Pat Herst and Earl Apfelbaum on unsolicited approvals.

Long-time APS sales manager J.E. Guest of Dallas, Texas, missed his first convention in thirty-one years when he and his wife were injured in an auto accident just a few miles south of the Quaker City. Both recovered, but not in time to be present at the meeting.

At this convention, the Philatelic Library Association, headed by the ubiquitous Dan Vooy, became Unit Number 15. This was the forerunner of the American Philatelic Research Library. Its journal, the Philatelic Literature Review, is still the outstanding publication in this area. In 1953, the PLA had 595 members.

One of the moving events of the Philatelic convention was the recognition of the only surviving charter member, Hiram Deats, president in 1904–1905 and long a great APS leader and supporter. Deats noted that he had been chairman of the first exhibition of the APS, sixty-four years earlier. This loyal elder statesman was given a standing ovation.

During this period, familiar names appeared as new members, among them Sandy Arnold, Tom Crigler, Sherrell Nunnelly, Ward Parker, Bob Murch, Jacques Minkus, Mrs. Arthur (Maryette) Lane (of Stamp Theft Committee fame), Tom Alexander, Bob Brandeberry, Ira

‘May APS Membership Always Mean So Much’

Former APS President Wilber F. Cannon, whose term is chronicled in this month’s chapter of the APS history, was unable to attend the 100th convention in Washington, D.C., in August. He sent the following letter, which was read to the awards banquet gathering:

When I joined, the American Philatelic Society was only thirty-six years old and I was fifteen — but even then it was the outstanding hobby organization in the country, just as it is sixty-four years later.

In those days, the Society had less than 4,000 members, and it was run by those who might be called amateurs. Today it is directed by professionals. We now take in, in one year, as new members, more than we had on our entire membership roster. We have grown because of the increased services offered.

In those days, the executive director was a part-time dealer who operated from a corner of his spare bedroom or from his kitchen table. Compare that with what we have today — a million-dollar home, run by men and women whose only interests are the welfare of our members and the services available to them.

This full-time staff, in our own building, is a reality because of the realization of a dream of one of the most outstanding presidents we have had in the twentieth century, Donald F. Lybarger of the Garfield-Perry Chapter in Cleveland.

The first convention I attended was in 1924, held in Detroit. In those days, there was proxy voting, and fights often occurred on the convention floor to determine where the following year’s convention would be held. Today our conventions are planned several years ahead by our staff.

In 1949, when the Buffalo Chapter nominated me for president, I felt honored. But I did not expect to be elected, because my opponent was better qualified, with greater abilities. The years I served as president were the most fulfilling in my life. I met thousands of collectors and I visited scores of our chapters and affiliates. Nothing can take the place of such experiences.

Perhaps the most thrilling experience I had as an officer of the APS occurred after the adjournment of the fifty-ninth convention at Newark in 1945. Five of us officers drove to Hyde Park to pay our respects to the most famous member we have ever had, and who had died a few months previously. With the permission of his widow, we placed a spray of red roses on the grave of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was an awesome sensation.

When I was in high school, back in the early ’20s, I had a small mail-order stamp business. Once I advertised some stamps for sale, and a total stranger sent me a check for several thousands of dollars, without seeing the stamps, and unknown to me. A year later, when I met him, I asked him why he had so much confidence in me. His reply was, “Although we were strangers, you were a member of the APS, and I therefore felt that you had to be honest, with integrity, and that you would treat me fairly.”

May membership in the APS always mean so much to fellow collectors.
The 2-cent Jefferson stamp was issued in conjunction with the sixty-eighth annual convention of the APS in San Francisco in 1954.


At the sixty-seventh annual convention in Houston, Texas, in September 1953, Burleigh Jacobs was elected president without opposition.

Admiral Jesse Jackson, a long-time member, invited the convention to meet in Norfolk, Virginia. The meetings were free from the frequent lengthy debates that once had characterized them; new procedures evidently were functioning well. San Francisco was chosen for the 1954 meeting.

John R. Dunfee of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, was beginning his active career as chairman of the membership campaign that eventually would produce the Society's startling growth. Membership in the mid-1950s continued around the 11,000 mark.

In the AP, L.N. and M. Williams began the articles that culminated in the definitive handbook, Fundamentals of Philately, published by the APS. Clarence Hennan was a regular contributor to the AP, and the first of many articles by Barbara Mueller appeared.

The 1954 convention in San Francisco was a grand success, thanks to the leadership of Joe Clary and his committee. Conversations centered on the Society's weak points: membership, chapters, and inactive units.

George Blizil's committee on international relations reported that APS awards were given at a dozen foreign exhibitions, gaining new and wide recognition for the Society.

Jacobs appointed a "watchdog" group to examine new emissions, to determine whether they really were issued for postal use, or whether they were labels foisted on the philatelic world as legitimate stamps. Chairman was Bob Murch of St. Louis. Members included W.W. Wylie, publisher of the Western Stamp Collector, and John R. Dunfee, assisted by Society attorney John Pope. This was the forerunner of the controversial "Black Blot" program of the APS, which sought to inform collectors about such philatelic abuses by postal administrations and their agents.

Planning was under way for FIPEX, to be held in New York in March 1956, and again APS members were in the vanguard. Laurence Shoemaker, who was elected APS president in 1955, was an active member of the New York committee. In September 1955, Dave Lidman was promoted to a top executive job with The New York Times and resigned as editor of the AP. Dave's service to the journal did not end at that point, however; in later years, he twice served as interim editor. His successor was Charless Hahn of Chicago.

The Cannon-Jacobs-Shoemaker era of eight years ended with the membership still fluctuating around the 11,000 mark, but with a strong Society operating under an efficient central office and good leadership.

Next Month: The "watershed" years.

This Envelope Is Hard To Forget

by Clyde Jennings

This cover has been bugging me (oops! sorry 'bout that!) ever since I first saw it. Maybe, under the circumstances, 'fascinating me' would be a better term.

This obviously is the return envelope of a company whose principals had either a striking sense of humor or an ingenious idea for an advertising gimmick. The recipient's attention was undoubtedly captured the minute he or she opened whatever brought this clever return envelope. That's one artistically talented bug!

The cover was registered, as is obvious from the "1370" number and the ten-cent rate. It was sent in 1890, per the Buffalo, New York, receiving mark of February 3 on the reverse.

Nothing earth-shaking, no particular postal history connotations — just an amusing bit of philatelic history from the Sweet Home Soap company.

This bug's penmanship leaves little to be desired. (Cover courtesy of Bill Bomar, Orlando, Florida. Photo courtesy of Walt Henderson, Melrose, Florida.)