

# The Cover Story

## How World War II Brought Stamp Collections to the U.S. by Phil Fettig

I guess the other title of this article could have been “Help! ... I can't stop buying stamp collections!” In many respects there is nothing new about trying to cut back on purchases and then buying opportunities seem to fall out of the sky. Dealers are used to streaks, both good and bad. What did appear different over the past six weeks was where the collections came from or what influenced bringing the material here and how it was all connected to World War II.

In early May of this year Bob and I walked into a stamp club meeting (not CFSC) and took the next two available seats. Being the gentleman that I am, I let Bob go through the door first so I ended up sitting between him and the door. I wish I could claim that I was that smart (or devious) but I can't. A few minutes later a nice Lady came in and sat next to me. After a short time she asked if I was a dealer and if so, was I interested in looking at her stamps. I tried to explain I was cutting back but the disappointed look on her face got to me and I ended up buying what she had with her and agreeing to visit her home later in the month. After I returned from out of state, Bob and I made the trip and realized why she appeared to be in a hurry for me to look at her stamps – she was moving out of town the next day. We sat in a room empty except for a card table, 2 folding chairs and piles of albums. Three hours later I was the owner of some U.S. postage, lots of junk covers along with some better ones and many thousands of used W/W and US stamps. I must admit that the following is part speculation on my part, but here it is; her husband, who passed away 12-15 years ago, was an Army Pilot during WWII. She was from Central or South America and they met during the war. It appears that he made some flights in the Southern U.S. or Caribbean prior to his transfer to Europe. After the war her mother came to live with them. The husband was now a businessman with dealings in the Central/South American area and accumulated used stamps for the mother in law to make into packets. The plan never was carried out but as a result of the efforts I ended up with a huge stock of cheap used stamps, some nice covers, some postage and packages of unopened Dennison Hinges. **Figure (1) [on Front Cover]** shows a U.S. Embassy wax seal on a letter mailed in Japan and **Figure (2) [on Front Cover]** is a sample of 5 mint items from a box that contains approximately 10,000 stamps in sheets. Sounds interesting you say? Not really since there are only 10 - 15 different stamps in the box! Anybody need wallpaper?

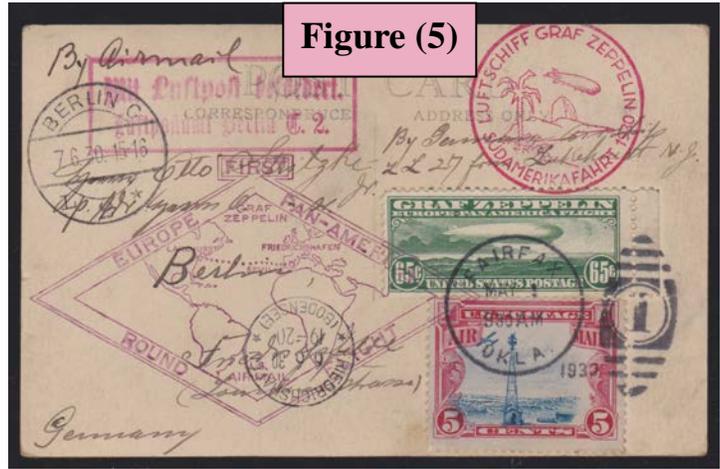
The second collection, a small one, resulted from a phone call. The lady said she had a small French collection and since nobody in her family wanted it, would I be interested? A few days later I visited her home and found the collection was not of French stamps, but common low value European stamps and some Nazi era covers in a French album. In fact, she was born and raised in France and this was her collection. She was a teen or young adult during the German Occupation of WWII. After the war she met a U.S. Army Sergeant and became his bride. She stopped collecting stamps but brought the collection to the US and kept it all these years. The covers represented most of the value in her collection and **Figure (3) [on Front Cover]** shows one of them.

The third story is a little more complicated. An Army Captain was assigned to the Occupation Forces in Germany since he had just reported to Europe as the war ended in May, 1945. According to his granddaughter he then set about trading cigarettes,



**Figure (4)**

candy and food for stamp collections which he shipped back to the U.S. At some point in the future, these collections were left to four relatives including the person I was dealing with. These collections were divided with no pattern or reason and she had no idea what her sisters and one aunt received. The portion she obtained was primarily German and U.S. and a small amount of other countries, along with some covers. There was a small amount of U.S. postage which was pretty much the only thing that was post 1945 - everything else was older. Some material is mounted in old heavy German made albums. Other items are in old approval books. All the identification, descriptions and prices are frozen in pre-1945 German language and prices. It also contained numerous old stock books. It became clear that many other albums had been stripped and the stamps transferred over to stock books as most have hinges still attached. This is primarily a used accumulation. **Figure (4)** is one page from an approval book containing U.S. items. Looks like these approvals are just a tad bit better than those we received from Harris or Mystic as youngsters! A lot of work is ahead to check identity and condition. I have already watched a \$1 Columbian stamp float apart when I tried to soak the hinge off. **Figure (5)** is an attractive Zepp item.

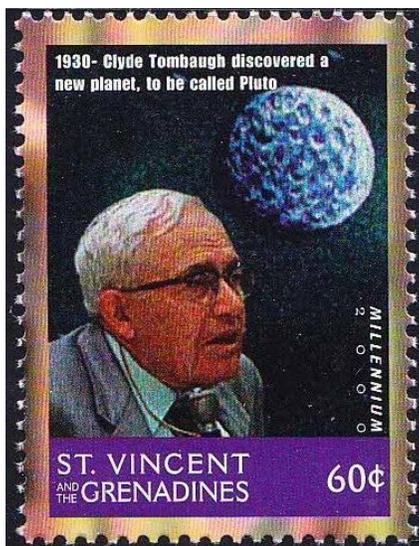


Three families and three stories that all started in the mid 1940's Germany and came together in Central Florida within a few weeks during May – June 2015. It is indeed a small, but interesting world.

## Did You Know? by John C. Robbins

The New Horizons spacecraft has a US stamp (Scott #2577) affixed to it!

On July 14, 2015, the probe flew by Pluto, a dwarf planet, and its moons, thus completing the first reconnaissance of the solar system's known planets. No other stamp has traveled 3 billion miles.



Alan Stern, planetary scientist and principal investigator of NASA's New Horizons project, decided to have the stamp placed on the probe. Stern has also been supportive of efforts to convince the USPS to issue a stamp commemorating the New Horizons mission.

Pluto was discovered at Lowell Observatory, in Flagstaff, Arizona, by Clyde Tombaugh, on February 18, 1930. The tiny Caribbean nation of St Vincent and the Grenadines issued a stamp in honor of Tombaugh in 2000.

[Editor's Note: Since I was taught that there are 9 planets – in my mind Pluto will always be in that group. Oddly enough a couple of months ago, I had the planet discussion with a youngster who had just learned there are 8 planets. I felt like I was caught in a *Twilight Zone* episode.]