

## Phil the Postage Stamp Chapter 6

By Randall Priest

Having arrived home and taken out of the box we were in, I feel the fresh air and that cramped feeling is gone. We are put back on the shelf and I can relax with my friends.

It has been some time, as the days go by with nothing going on. I have been talking to my friends about our last adventure, and they all agree it was quite fun and very interesting. Then one night everything changes and I believe that I will never be the same.

As we are dozing off for the night – when -- all of a sudden the lights come on, and there is a mad rush to remove things from the room. I cannot see just what is going on, I can only hear sounds. Things are banging around, people are talking loudly. I hear what sounds like books falling to the floor. Then I feel the shelf that we are on, moving and shaking. There has been a lot of activity and we are still on the shelf. Now you do remember that my nose, which may be small, works very well. It is at this point that I can identify a smell. It is smoke!

The shuffling of books and other things is still going on. Now as the smell of smoke gets stronger the noise is starting to slow down. The lights are still on, but no one has taken the book, that my friends and I are in, down. I can still smell the smoke, when the lights go out, and it is dark. The activity has almost stopped.

Now it gets very quiet, as I strain to hear something. Then in the distance, I hear a cracking sound. This is all that I hear. After some time has passed, the smell of smoke has gotten stronger.

The next sound that I hear is in the distance, it is a siren. I hear the firemen calling out to each other. They seem to be looking for someone.

Could it be my owner? Then in the room we are in, it sounds like two or three people talking. One says that “he does not look good”, then, another, one says “we must get him out of here now!”

Once more it is quiet in the room. I still smell smoke, but the crackling has stopped. As I listen for more clues as to what is going on, I feel something rolling down my back. Soon I can identify it. It is water. Now as you remember from my past experiences, I would just as soon skip the water route. But it is not to be, the longer we sit on the shelf the wetter it is getting. Well it seems that the water has stopped for now. All is quiet and my friends and I are all very wet. In fact I haven't been this wet since I was soaked to remove the tab from my back. It has been at least a day or more. Someone comes into the room and takes the book, that we are in, from the shelf and we are put into a plastic box.

That evening someone has removed the wet book from the box and started to carefully turn each page. As he gets to our page, I can get a better idea of just what is going on. Each page is removed from the book, one at a time, then each page is placed face up so it can dry. I can see that some of the pages have lost stamps. I have no idea where they could be. As the water begins to dry, I try to talk to some of my friends. One tells me that being in the front of the book was not the best place to be. From his vantage point what he saw was the fire itself coming in his direction. In fact as I look into his face I can see that one corner of his face is black. This is not good. It seems that my friends and I, who were located in the middle of the book, did not get any damage.

The next step is to remove all the stamps that can be used again. As we are taken off of each page and place into a drying book we are thankful that we have been spared.

# COVER STORY

## The Movie Stamp By Richard M. Sitron

Stamp collectors sometimes come across an item that has a close resemblance to the US 5¢ Parcel Post stamp (Scott Q5) but which they cannot find listed in any catalogue. The label was produced in three different colors (red, green, and blue), and features a train and the words "Postage/Mail Train/3 Cents 3". These exist both perforated and imperforate.

These labels were produced by a Hollywood movie studio in the early 1940s as "play" stamps to be shown on letters in movies. This ploy was to get around a rule, which at the time was strictly enforced, against the illustration of any genuine US postage, whether used or unused. This meant that envelopes could not be shown close up in any film.

A stamp collector suggested to the movie company that it should print labels which looked like real stamps and put them on any envelope which was to be filmed. This suggestion was adopted, and was first utilized in a movie "A Letter for Evie", in which a letter formed a key part of the plot. (ed. Note: MGM, 1946, romantic comedy with Marsha Hunt, John Carroll, and Hume Cronyn)

The stamp collector who formed this idea was William O'Hara, who was employed as a tax accountant by the movie studio. O'Hara afterwards supplied a number of his friends with sets of labels, and when news of their existence was discovered, he received many requests for them from stamp collectors. In December 1945, O'Hara wrote an article about the labels for a stamp journal, and he offered to supply a free set to anyone who sent in a stamped envelope. He later revealed that he mailed out 488 sets.

In his sending's O'Hara asked the recipients not to use the labels on private mail, but some collectors did just that to obtain postally-used copies. On April 1, 1946, a postal employee spotted a label on a letter and reported to a postal inspector.

This in turn was relayed to the Secret Service who questioned both O'Hara and the movie studio. These parties turned over all remaining stocks to the Secret Service.

In the 1950s, an American stamp dealer who had acquired a small stock of these "movie stamps" foolishly advertised them for sale. He sold more than 100 sets before authorities confiscated the unsold remainder of his stock. Then the Secret Service demanded a list of the names of all the collectors who had purchased the labels. The dealer refused this demand and the Secret Service did not pursue the matter any further.

About this time, the US Treasury Department also seized a set of labels that was on display at stamp exhibition, but since then there has been no action taken against collectors who display the labels.

In light of the relaxed manner shown by authorities regarding the depiction of US postage stamps (both in color and black and white) possession of the "movie stamps" is no longer of any consequence, and then have become a part of Cinderella collecting.

[Pictured on the front cover of this newsletter are the three different colors of the imperforate stamp (green, red, & blue along with the perforated blocks of four in the same colors. If you would like a color jpg image of these great pieces of philatelic history -- please email: [Editor@CentralFloridaStampClub.org](mailto:Editor@CentralFloridaStampClub.org)]