

World Chess Championship to the Merry Mailman

by Mike Schumacher

It is always interesting to see where the path leads when researching a cover. The two covers in this article are of course part of my exhibit on the 1972 World Chess Championship Match which was held in Reykjavik, Iceland. The exhibit has gone through several reorganizations and remounts over the past 15 years since it first debuted. The learning and research about the material related to the event is an ongoing process and hopefully will result in a resource book in time for the 50th Anniversary (July 2022).



Figure C1

The 1972 World Chess Championship captured significant attention around the world and became known as “The Match of the Century”. The event played out during the peak of the “Cold War” between Russia and the United States. (I guess not much has changed in the relationship between the two countries over the last 50 years.) It pitted the reigning World Chess Champion, Boris Spassky, from Russia against the challenger,

Robert “Bobby” Fischer, from the United States. No American had ever won the title and the Russians had held the title for nearly 50 years. It was also a significant event for the host country, Iceland, and the game of chess. Iceland issued its first chess stamp for the event and the organizing committee of the Icelandic Chess Federation created several cacheted covers and postcards. Stamp dealers, artists and philatelists also jumped on the opportunity to earn some Kroners. In fact, more than 115 different cachets and 50 postcards were created for the event. It turns out that the 1972 World Chess Championship was not only a big deal for Iceland, the world and Chess, but also Philately. A special Post Office was opened at the stadium during the 34 dates that the games were played, and a special postmark was created and used. My research finds that some 500,000 covers were created; over 6,200 registered letters were processed by the Post Office at Laugardalsholl (the stadium); and likely a similar number of non-registered pieces of mail. This was a huge amount of work for the 5 postal employees who were busy affixing the chess stamp and hand canceling the items. (One must wonder – has there ever been a larger philatelic event?)



Figure C2

Nearly all of these cachets/covers were created in Iceland, regardless of the worldwide attention that the event attracted. Only 4 or 5 different cachets are known created outside of Iceland. As I researched these two covers, I attempted to learn more about K & S from New Hyde Park, N.Y. The descriptive information can be seen as the last line of text in the cachet design – with the orange arrow [Figures C1 & C2]. Unfortunately, nothing came up about K & S.

New Hyde Park it turns out was part of the land parcel granted to Thomas Dongan (the 4th royal governor of New York) in 1683. He built a mansion there, but in 1691 fled to New England and eventually to Ireland when King James II failed to regain power. The Dongan estate was sold to George Clark (Secretary of Provence of

New York) in 1715. He named it Hyde Park in honor of his wife, Ann Hyde. The name was changed in 1871 when a Post Office was opened there, so as to avoid confusion with Hyde Park in upstate New York. New Hyde Park is currently a village with a total area of approximately .8 square miles.

The next step of my research looked at where these covers were canceled – Franklin Square N.Y. It turns out that Franklin Square is an unincorporated hamlet about 2 miles from New Hyde Park.

Originally the area was known as Trimming Square and changed in 1851 to Washington Square in honor of George Washington. The name was changed again in the 1870s when the residents attempted to establish a local post office. However, the U.S. Postal Service declined to use the name Washington Square, because they felt there were too many other places in New York with Washington in their names. Franklin Square is home to the Franklin National Bank, who introduced such innovations as the bank credit card, the drive-up teller window, and junior savings accounts. It turns out that several notable people came from Franklin Square. Al Weis (Major League baseball player); Michael Tucci who played Sonny in Grease with John Travolta; Michael Massimino (NASA Astronaut); Jeff Tamarkin (musical journalist and award-winning author of the biography of the Jefferson Airplane); Alice Hoffman (novelist and Children’s writer best known for her novel “*Practical Magic*”) to name just a few. But the notable person who caught my attention was Ray Heatherton and his daughter Joey Heatherton. Ray Heatherton was a singer, Broadway actor and television personality. He played in the children’s program “The Merry Mailman” from 1950 to 1956, before falling victim to false accusations that he was a communist. He was later able to clear his name and returned as the Merry Mailman from 1961 to 1963.

Well, at this point in my research I am still no closer to figuring out who K & S was or why the covers were postmarked in Franklin Square, but I did learn about several other things, including the television show “The Merry Mailman”. What other hobby provides so many learning opportunities?

These covers are postmarked the day Bobby Fischer won the title – World Chess Champion.

More Philatelic Fun during the Pandemic

by Phil Fetting



Many times, over the years I have written about a cover I found when looking for something else. Well, I still have not found the original item, but I keep finding other things to research.

Figure C3 shows a simple airport dedication cover for Sanford. Research quickly got me confused, a condition which happens more often at 77! My cover is from 1932 but I found a listing for a dedication in 1931, as well as further dedications as Naval Air Station Sanford and numerous names for the property after World War II.

It turns out that the first Sanford Airport, in 1931, was small so a second larger one was established in 1932. This airport became Sanford Naval Air Station in World War II and is now the Sanford-Orlando International Airport. When it is safe to visit museums again, I will head to the Sanford Museum for further research.