

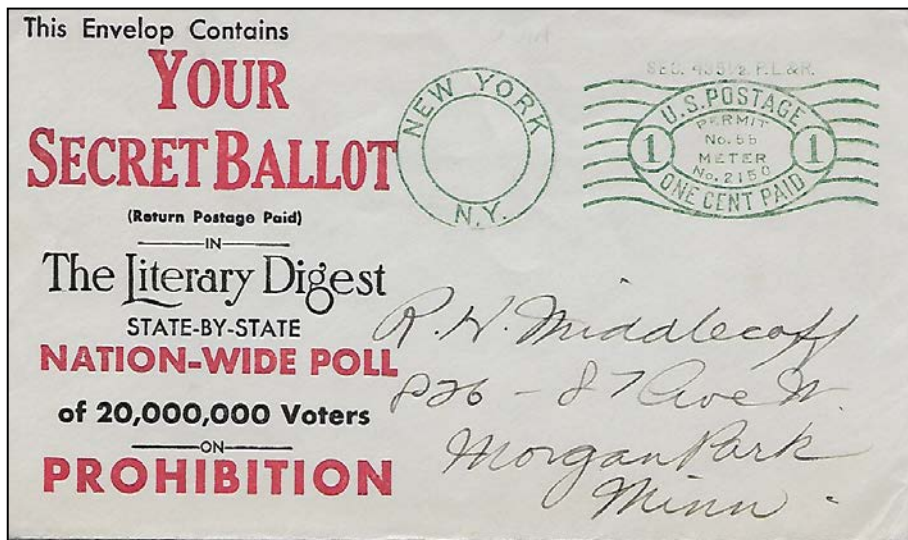
The Literary Digest Polls

by Steve Patrick

The illustrated cover is from my small collection of temperance covers that help define the rise and fall of Prohibition in the United States. Literary Digest was a popular magazine from the 1890s to about 1936. They would mail out millions of post cards to conduct “national” polls by secret ballot. I believe that this cover with a nice green meter permit was from a 1922 poll to assess attitudes about how the Volstead Act worked. (The National Prohibition Act was officially named the Volstead Act after Andrew Volstead, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, who managed the legislation.)

The 18th amendment to the constitution was passed in 1918 prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquor. The Literary Digest asked the question: Are you in favor of enforcement, modification, or revocation of the Volstead Act that was the law that enforced Prohibition. The nationwide poll was 236,329 for continuance and strict enforcement, 253,009 for modification to permit light wines and beer, and 128,500 in favor of repeal.

The poll seemed to indicate that, a majority of Americans wanted to drink -- however it would be another 11 years before the 21st amendment would kill prohibition. The cover was probably sent unsealed or with a special one cent rate and included a mail back penny post card. If the was two cents postage plus printing and handling costs etc.



readers, car owners, and telephone owners who had higher incomes and were more likely to vote Republican. The polls for the Presidential election years of 1924, 1928 and 1932 had all been correct. In September, 1936, Maine voted early and the results were for Landon. But in the end Landon won only the eight electoral votes of Maine and Vermont, with FDR taking 523 – for a landslide win. The phrase “As Maine goes, so goes the nation” which had much popular use at the time, was temporarily changed to “As Maine goes, so goes Vermont!” as the Presidential election of 1936 unfolded.

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Some polling included ballots passed out to Campbell Soup workers and Edison plant workers who voted overwhelmingly for wine and beer. Thomas Edison himself stated, “Evidently the large foreign group among the workers who voted are not well informed as to their best interests.”

The Literary Digest went out of business after the 1936 presidential election when they predicted that Alf Landon would overwhelmingly defeat FDR for re-election. The problem was their polling sample that came from

Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers



Some of the early members of the Hollywood Stamp Club in 1969 (when it was founded!) including at bottom right John J. Britt, a former officer of New York City's Collectors Club.

A while ago, I decided to collect mint worldwide stamps to 1940. I have always been a fan of blank pages. Simply filling in the printed album pages seems too orderly. Sometimes stamps will come along with marginal inscriptions for which I consider almost sinful to detach. I will mount postal history on blank pages. Say an envelope used in the time period is chosen to give a sense of how the stamps were used. Advertising covers, crash covers! Following my rules for my albums, you get a sense that my albums explode with life. Good!

Many years ago, Scott Publications came out with a five volume Brown International hard covered set, 1840-1940. Somewhere along the line, another company was able to reproduce the pages from this set, printed on one side of the page. The primary source now is Subway Stamp Shop on the web (www.subway-stampshop.com) and toll free 800-221-9960, ask for John.

Ever buy a collection at auction without viewing it first? The rule is "over 10 stamps, the auction lot cannot be returned." It is altogether frustrating to purchase sight unseen and win what cannot be incorporated in one's collection.

Months ago I attended an auction. In the catalog appeared a lot I had not taken the time to view. As the lots came up to bid, one sounded right up my alley: a couple of thousand European stamps up to 1940 mint/used on Scott pages, better material included. I bid, I bought. Oy! When I was home, I was crestfallen to discover only 15 stamps were mint and the rest were used. Still, I paid fair money for what I received. Competitive bidding.

I'm not one to complain unless I absolutely have to. I suppose that if I had argued, I would not have had to retain the lot. But as I looked over the collection, the more appealing it became. I put it to the side with a grin. Collecting "Used" became one of those "Why Not?" quandaries.

One way to collect used stamps is simply obtain one example per Scott major number. A specialist might go for shades, varieties or on cover.

Collecting "Used" means having the opportunity to branch out into lots of side doors. I was born in 1949, so I could try a calendar collection of 366 stamps, each bearing a different postmark for all the days of the year. Challenging. Or pick any stamp and display town cancels or shades. When I collected China,

I had a lot of fun with English language postmarks. I enjoy U.S. 1st, 2nd and 3rd issue revenues with printed cancels as there are many different.

No lie, those international pages take up a lot of room and they are costly. I bided my time, and lucky boy that I am, a partial set of the same pages, albeit used, 1900-1940 came up on eBay, where I bought it for \$245 postpaid. They were punched for the blue International binder. A most unusual listing.

Scott binders are so well made that I am well satisfied buying a used binder (\$10) instead of new (\$52). Being frugal makes a difference as my Internationals now total 20 binders. I have a mixture of used and new binders, depending how patient I was when I needed them.

Both the mint and used collections are re-arranged geographically. I tend to concentrate on the areas that I have had the least experience with: Central & South America and Europe. Collecting worldwide means I will never run out of something to collect.

Now that I think about it, I'm so happy that I accidentally got into collecting used stamps.

Thanks to the super active Hollywood Stamp Club, I added more Internationals to my used collection, extending the collection to 1959. Weekly, 70 or more club members participate in the auction as so much material is available. Visitors are welcome!

Doctor's prescription for a healthy and happy retirement? A weekly booster shot of the Hollywood Stamp Club!

Friends + stamps = big smile.

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And the Hollywood Stamp Club meets every Tuesday at 5:00 pm:

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hollywoodstampclub.com