

The Cover Story

Life and Times of Boston's Heyday Stamp Years: 1970s-1980s

by Norman Hinds, Jr.

When I started my own business in 1976, at the age of 22, I didn't know what to expect. I lived 30 miles north of Boston in Newburyport. I had worked in a coin & stamp shop since I was about 14 and felt I had to partake of the Boston stamp dealers and see what they offered.

In this early time there were local shows at the Cardinal Spellman Philatelic Museum, several big yearly shows in Boston, and other small ones that I can't remember after 50 years. Recently I have had dreams of going back to do shows at the Spellman Museum and running into all my old friends (most of which are no longer with us!)

The Cardinal Spellman Museum is in Weston, MA on the Regis College campus and has a fabulous display of stamps, books and philatelic items. Cardinal Francis Spellman was the Archbishop of New York (1939-1967) and a world-renowned philatelist. A link to this history is below:

[Spellman Museum of Stamps and Postal History - Wikipedia](#)

Below, you'll find another link to the museum as well as videos that are definitely worth watching.

[In the News | Spellman Museum](#)

At the Spellman bourse (and all others) Richard Champagne was the dealer we all looked up to. Although his stock was smaller than that of other national dealers, it was still much larger than what any of us had. He subsequently acquired a substantial inventory, provided expert services for prominent firms, and is recognized as a member of the ASDA Hall of Fame. Dick was always a fountain of knowledge and would share his opinions on stamps, if asked.

For dealers & collectors in the 70s & 80s it was a pleasure to visit the main auction houses or stores. I would spend a lot of time looking over the lots to come up for sale in the next auction.

Stanley Richmond, was the owner of the Daniel F. Kelleher Stamp auctions, purchasing it in the mid-1960s from Daniel F. Kelleher. It was founded in 1885 and is the longest running US stamp auction company. A great amount of material and big collections flowed through that auction. He also purchased Scott Stamp & Coin and H.E. Harris. He eventually merged with the current chairmen, David Coogle & Lawrence Gibson in 2010. Stanley was the first person to pay over \$100,000 --for a US stamp (C3a) in 1978 and is a member of the ASDA Hall of Fame.

H.E. Harris was living on fumes of what their business was worth many years ago -- selling Crystal Mounts (which turned out to be disastrous for the gum) and stamp albums. We used to use their US price catalogue. The damage of Crystal mounts still reveals itself today. A couple years ago I bought a nice US collection including a Zepp set, BUT every unused stamp had disturbed/glazed gum. I'm sure most of them were NH in the beginning until Crystal mounts were used and put in different mounts later.

The other Boston auction was owned by Simmy (Seymour) Jacobs. He started out selling the low-end plate blocks to generate cash-flow and then started the stamp auctions on State Street from 1956-1987. The workers there were young, smart and enjoyed life including brothers Eddie & Paul Kukstis. It was a joyful trip to check out the lots and bid live in the auctions. Simmy pioneered the terms "JUMBO" and rode the wave of the stamp market, like setting records of realizing \$10,000 for Zepp sets that are now worth less than 20% of that.

Attending most of the Simmy auctions were Larry Volovski (LV) in his early 20s and first owning Valley stamp Co. and now Volovski Rarities. Richard Champagne (RC), who I've already mentioned, myself (NH) and many others. It was always fun and competitive. Sometimes we would make deals to lay off some lots so we could all buy lots and not be greedy.



Naturally, the New England Stamp Co. was also involved. Founded in 1893 in Boston. Bill Bogg was the owner from the 1950s to 1980s. He relocated his business to Naples, FL, and died in 1986.

This was their beautiful signature logo.

The following is from an article I found online:

- **Philatelic Hub:** During its time in Boston, it became a major institution in American philately. It was known for its extensive reference library and catalogs, such as the *Catalogue of Books and Periodicals Relating to Postage Stamps*, published in the early 20th century.
- **Leadership:** A key figure in its later history was **William "Bill" Grice Bogg, Jr.** (1928–1986), a respected dealer who owned the company from the mid-20th century through its relocation.

Relocation to Naples, Florida

The Move: In the **1980s**, Bill Bogg relocated the business to Naples, Florida.

- **Logistics:** Famously, Bogg moved his massive stamp stock from Boston to Florida by chartering a **private plane**.
- **Personal Connection:** Bogg was a specialist in Confederate postal history and Florida Confederate covers. His interest in Florida's history likely influenced the move, as he also owned the printing plate for the 2¢ Altered Plate (a famous Confederate rarity) which he famously turned into a coffee table in his Naples home. The business was purchased by Robert Hausin and continued to operate in Naples, FL until his passing several years ago.

Another dealer was Jack Molesworth who operated on Beacon Street. He was not as well known to the public but had a fabulous US, Confederate & Canadian stock and many mail customers. He was extremely knowledgeable and signed most of his items. He had several talented young philatelists that started out with him, learned a lot and moved on.

The notable philatelists who worked for Molesworth during their early careers include:

- **Richard Frajola:** A highly respected philatelic consultant and researcher, Frajola worked with Molesworth from 1976 to 1978. He frequently credits this time for shaping his understanding of stamp grading and the commercial market.
- **Trish Kaufmann:** Patricia "Trish" Kaufmann, currently a leading expert in Confederate States philately, was mentored by Molesworth and maintained a lifelong professional relationship with him until his passing in 2007.
- **Bill Schumann:** A professional philatelist who worked in Molesworth's Boston office during the 1960s and 1970s.

- **Gordon Eubanks:** Though primarily known for his career in the software industry, Eubanks is a top-tier philatelist who has acknowledged the influence of dealers like Molesworth on his early collecting and professional approach.

In 1971 his whole stock was stolen. The following article provides a detailed account of the heist involving the notorious Winter Hill Gang, led by Whitey Bulger, as well as the subsequent Cardinal Spellman heist. It's long but very detailed story about all the stamp thefts and mob connections. Exciting times in Boston!

<https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/periodical/635125>

Richard Frojola's early Boston life per his web site and link below to his Linn's article on the "influencers" in his stamp career:

Simmy Jacobs: Simmy convinced me to move from Michigan to Boston in 1974 to be a buyer from his stamp auction company. Thankfully my soon to be wife, Francine, was able to find a suitable nursing job at Massachusetts General Hospital. At the time Simmy's main business was the buying and selling of United States "jumbo" stamps. It was not a good match and I soon tired of traveling to stamp shows every weekend to buy material. However, I loved living in the Beacon Hill area of Boston during the Bicentennial. Fran and I lived a block up the hill from "The Bull & Finch Pub" which would later become famous as "Cheers" on the TV show of the same name.

Jack Molesworth: I worked with Jack from 1976 to 1978. He made a good living buying auction level US and CSA material as fine and selling as very fine. He was 100% reliable, predictable and consistent once you took the time to understand his terminology. My favorite memory of Jack was his attempt to explain to a potential buyer that a stamp Jack had described as "F-VF" that the stamp was centered fine in one direction and VF in the other direction. Brilliant!

Stanley Richmond: Stanley was a fixture in Boston during the time I lived there. When I went to Danbury, CT to work as a consultant to Sotheby's, Stanley bankrolled several independent partnership purchases such as the Gloeckner Siam in 1978 for \$600,000. My share of the profits on that purchase, plus several smaller purchases, allowed me to finance the purchase of material that was included in my first auction in 1981. Later, he was my partner in the purchase of the famous Crittenden Virginia City Pony Express correspondence. Later still, 1996 to 1998, I worked with Stanley and his son Larry with American Historical Auctions. I am happy to still count Stanley as a close friend and have long considered him to be the most knowledgeable philatelic dealer alive.

Richard's article is at this site:

<https://www.rfrajola.com/Linns.htm#:~:text=Simmy%20Jacobs:%20Simmy%20convinced%20me,of%20Boston%20during%20the%20Bicentennial.>

A note also about a few southern NH dealers. My dear friend Gil Fitton is a wonderful postal history dealer, and has helped me to add to my Newburyport, MA cover collection. Elwyn Doubleday passed a year ago. He was one of the leading authorities on U.S. stampless covers and greatly contributed to the ASCC.

My good friend John P.K. Haydon had a stamp store in Newburyport before I did. He later worked for both Jack Molesworth and me. He always wanted to find a #1 on cover from Newburyport (only 3 known) but never did. I was VERY lucky to find one of the 3 known covers over a year ago after looking for one for 50 years. I found out later from Siegel that it was owned by Frank Mandel and from his fabulous "Penguin" collection.

A scan of this rare cover is located on the front page of the newsletter.

Visiting Henry and Phillip Stevens in Alton Bay, NH was enjoyable. Henry came up with great material. Phillip, who was young at the time, now continues his father's legacy by running his Postal Stationery-com business.

To highlight changing times and values, I once did significant business selling visually appealing US stamps with minor flaws through various Linn's price lists. Two other dealers in the country did also. I believe Marlin Larson was one of them, but I can't recall the other person's name. To get to the point I used to pay 18% of CV and sell for 30%. These days, we're fortunate if we even reach 10%! A few other interesting values from 1975. I found a sales record book from then and here are a few of the interesting items:

- 8 cent Craftsmen Plate blocks... I paid 75 cents each for 100 of them. Now worth .13 at the most.
- Famous American NH PB's sold for \$300, now \$30-40.
- 756-765 PBs \$165 now \$75.

Historical reference (provided by F. Ferguson) using Scott's Specialized over the years shows the dramatic (and correct) decline in value for UN # 38 sheets. Now \$20.00 at the most.

Year	Catalog Value, UN #38
1981	\$500
1985	\$400
1990	\$180
1995	\$100
2000	\$110
2005	\$110
2010	\$95
2015	\$85
2020	\$50

Also, I still remember having a table at a big ASDA show in NYC around 1978-1979. Dealers were going crazy buying airmail sheets like C7-11 from me. I don't remember the prices, but today those are worth a fraction of that.

To be fair today's prices for rare and nice items are much more than then, which is only fair and right.

I spend hours a week watching the big national auctions live and am just astounded at the prices for high quality U.S. stamps which is good news. I've observed that the prices for modern stamps graded 98-100 have also dropped. People paying \$50 or more for a \$1.00 stamp is silly. Not counting the \$25- \$30 certification fee.

As always, I hope you enjoyed the article and it was fun remembering old times.

Editor's note: Norman has been a member of CFSC since 2023. He is also a member of FSDA and has had a dealers table on many FLOREX and Maitland show bourses. I first met him when his table was specializing in German Colonial era philatelic items. He now handles quality U S material.