

Scribblings



--from the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library

Vol. 7- No. 3
Phone - 303-759-9921

2038 So. Pontiac Way, Denver, CO, 80224
<http://www.collectors-mall.com/philib/RMPL.htm>

May-June 1999
E-Mail - rmpl@uswest.net

Trains, Tunnels, and Stamps

By Tim Bartshe, RMPL Member

The original railway system of the South African Republic (commonly known as the Transvaal) was built by a group of investors from the Netherlands incorporated as the NAZSM (Nederlandsche Zuid Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschaapij) or Netherlands/South African Railway Company. This company was founded in Amsterdam in 1887 with the sole purpose of building and operating the rail system in the South Africa Republic. Surveying began in 1887 with construction of the first line beginning on 1 November 1889. The first short portion of this line was opened 17 March 1890 to transport coal from Boksburg west to Johannesburg. Initial economic success in the booming gold fields of the Witwatersrand fueled the extensions of the lines to the southwest to Klerksdrop, southeast beyond Heidelberg and Standerton and ultimately to the east. This eastern line, from Pretoria to Komaati Poort, realized the ultimate Boer dream of an opening to the sea and successfully linked this land locked republic to the Indian Ocean via Lorenzo Marques (Maputo) in Delagoa Bay. The purpose of this short feature is to mix as many different and peripheral parts of philately together as possible in order to highlight an important of Transvaal History.

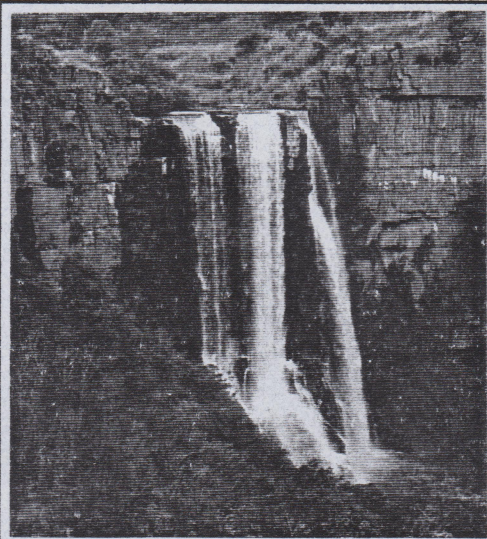
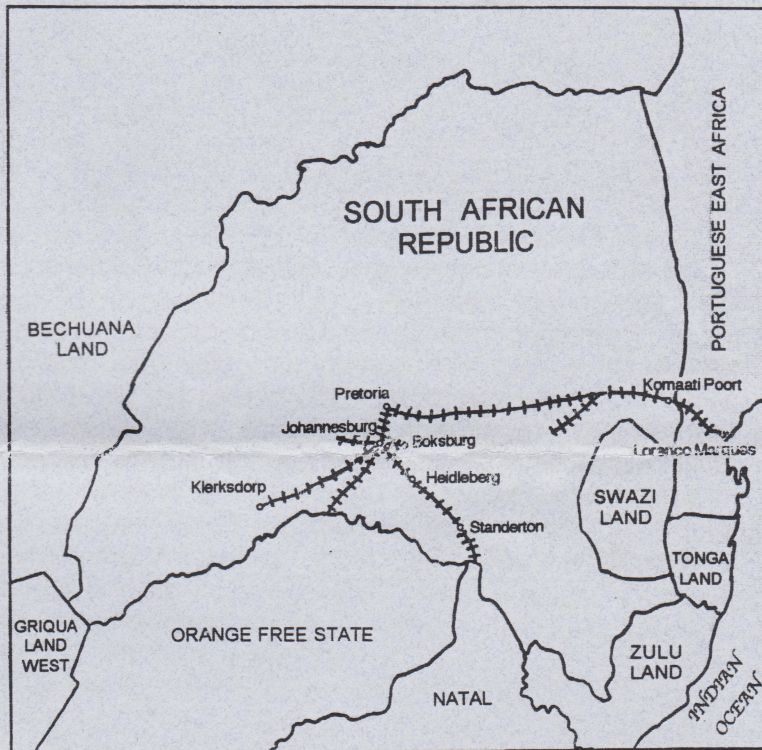
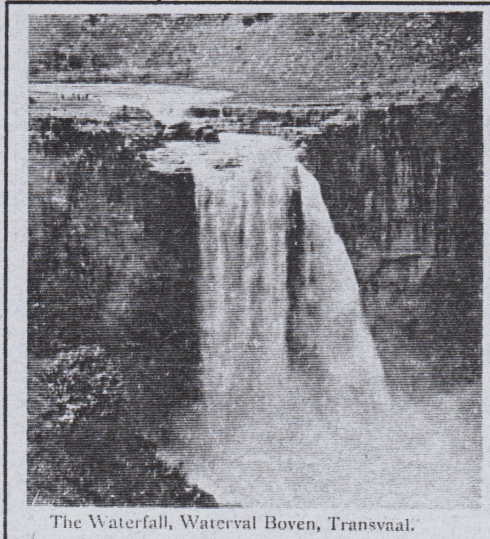


Figure 1. Elands River Falls, Waterval Boven. 1996.



The Waterfall, Waterval Boven, Transvaal.

Figure 2. Elands River Falls, ca. 1905.

As an introductory anecdote, in May of 1996, my wife and I visited South Africa. While touring, we drove through Waterval Boven and Waterval Onder on our way back to Johannesburg from Eastern Transvaal. Highway 4, connecting Pretoria to Mozambique, follows the Crocodile and Elands Rivers until just east of Belfast. This lovely river valley was anything but scenic to the railroad construction engineers, particularly around the natural obstruction of the

Elands Waterfall. This precipice, posing a barrier of some 600 feet in vertical relief in less than 5 miles, forced the NAZSM to build a tunnel and use a rack-railway system. We visited the tunnel site, now a national historical monument and nature preserve. You pull off the main highway (not a simple task) and park where you can. If you either have a flashlight (we didn't) or faith that you WILL soon see the light at the end of the tunnel (an old mine rat like myself laughs at the underground) by venturing through the tunnel, one emerges to see the lovely sight of the Elands Waterfall. The falls as they are seen today can be contrasted from a post card printed some 90 years ago. (figure 1 & 2)



Figure 3. Penny Post Commemorative, Scott 165

1894, was opened for service on 1 January 1895 some nine months earlier, hence doing dual service as a commemorative issue.

Expanding upon this common stamp and helping to make a display come alive with a story, one digs deep and looks for those items not found within the main stream of philately. As you have already seen in figure 2, my picture post collection has come into play. I was able to find a wonderful view of the train exiting the western portal shown in figure 5 (cow catcher just visible in the tunnel portal). You can see the "third" rail very plainly located in the middle of the track.

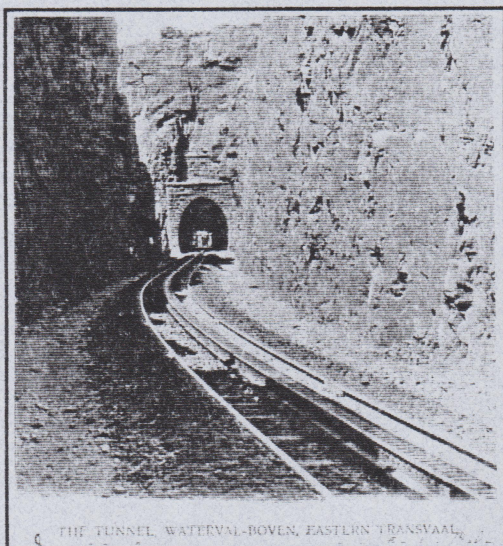


Figure 5. Western Portal Waterval Boven, ca. 1905.

If you look closely at the stamp you can see the accurate rendering of the same rail. This portal looks much as it did 90 years ago in my modern photo. (figure 6) Another post card of the valley east of the tunnel clearly shows the steep and curvy route the railroad had to take in order to make the vertical climb in such a short distance. (figure 7)

I then scoured my postmark collection to find an item relating to the railway, not just the post office of Waterval Boven or Waterval Onder. Many railway stations utilized their very own unique canceling devices quite dissimilar to the double-circle date stamps, utilized by most post offices. I discovered two such cancelers, one seen defacing the three 1d stamps still on piece. (figure 8) This cancel appears to be a rubber stamp measuring approximately 39mm in length and 6mm high E.G.: **WATERVAL BOVEN**. A metal date stamp of **21 NOV. 97** was also used. Both hand stamps are in violet ink and are hard to detect. The other example in blue ink is an entirely different canceler, being a metal hand stamp. Although incomplete it appears to be at least 46mm in length and 5mm high within a box 10mm high E.G.: **WATERVAL BOVEN**. The cancel is on a pair of 1d Vurtheim stamps. These cancelers are typical of railway cancels during this time period. Others are known from Johannesburg, Braamfontein, Badzijnloop, Elandsfontein, Paardekop, Avoca, Pan and Krokodilpoort, the latter two being on the line from Pretoria to Delagoa Bay.

How does this all tie into a philatelic discussion? Well, to begin with, the South African Republic issued a stamp commemorating the initiation of a uniform penny post for all letters under 1/2 ounce on 6 September 1895. The design of the first commemorative of Southern Africa (figure 3) shows a picture of the rack- or cog-rail train emerging from the eastern side of the tunnel mentioned above. (Note: a cog-rail system has a central "third" rail laid between the two main rails. Special locomotives had a cogged drive wheel that was used to increase power on steep sections of track. The need for this system was alleviated earlier this century after the completion of two tunnels that decreased the grade of the track.) The same portal as seen today is shown by my photograph. (figure 4) This tunnel, completed in late

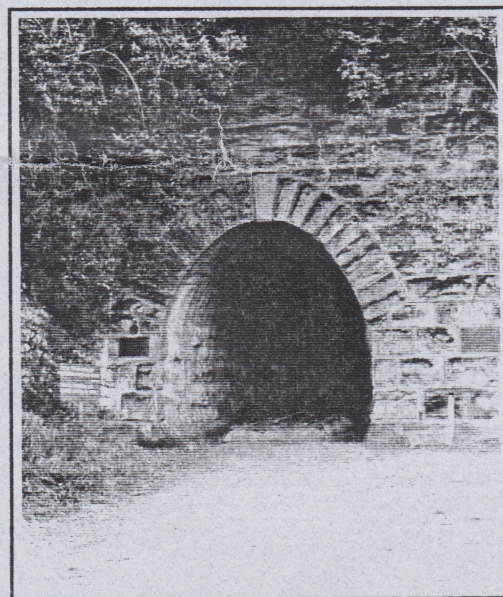


Figure 4. Eastern Portal Waterval Boven, NZASM RR, 1996

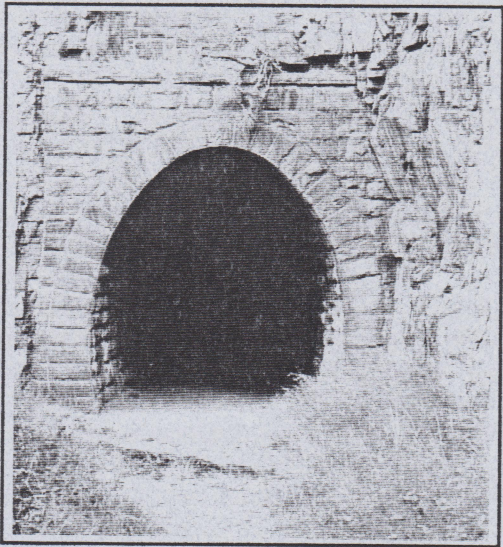


Figure 6. Western Portal Waterval Boven, 1996.

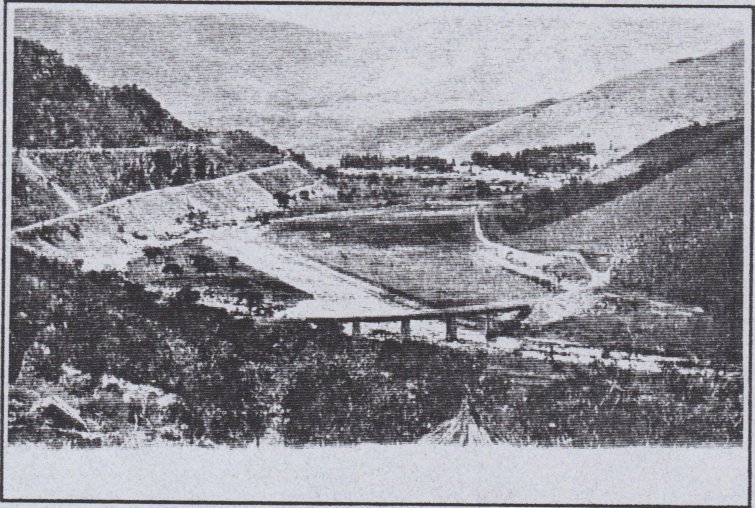


Figure 7. Railway Approach to Tunnel, Waterval Onder, ca. 1905.

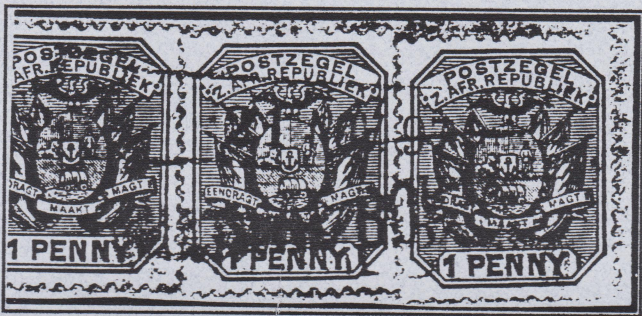


Figure 8. Waterval Boven Railway cancel, 1897.

first used, as canceled examples are extremely scarce and without cancel dates. Mathews [1986] quotes a "Transvaal Philatelist" article as saying they were issued in 1890. However, in van de Hurkís [1992] paper, he describes a letter from the then Chief of Operations proposing the idea for these stamps to his seniors in Amsterdam in mid-1891. By estimating the delay of the original design idea and the printing, they were probably first used in late 1891 or early 1892 and continued in usage until the British took over operations of the rail system in 1900.

The last item to add to a mini-display might be the railway stamps printed by the NZASM. As mentioned earlier, they were used to account for fees collected in the transport of parcels. These stamps were issued in four denominations: 1d green, 3d violet rose, 6d ultramarine and 1sh red. (figures 9 through 12) These stamps are not common by any means; Mathews estimating less than 3,000 copies each, copies in good condition being rare. It is unknown how many of them were printed and exactly when they were issued and



Figure 9. NZASM Parcel Stamp, 1d green, ca. 1891.



Figure 10. NZASM Parcel Stamp, 3d vio-rose, ca. 1891.



Figure 11. NZASM Parcel Stamp, 6d ultramarine, ca. 1891.



Figure 12. NZASM Parcel Stamp, 1sh red, ca. 1891.

Certainly, the search for peripheral items dealing with this tunnel and railway could expand further into special cachets, postal cancels, cinderellas and the like, or photographs of the old post office at Waterval Boven upstream from the tunnel. (figure 13) I just wanted to create an example to show how non-postage items can be used to embellish a rather plain stamp. I also wanted to touch on a subject that has great topical interest to some and much historical interest to me, and that is the railway system of Southern Africa. Not only did the rail system bring the postal services into the modern era, but also allowed for the expansion of the companion service of the telegraph lines.



Bibliography

Mathews, Maj. Ian B., 1986, *Transvaal Philately*, pub. Reijgers Publishers Ltd., 291p.

Putzel, Ralph F., 1990, *The Encyclopaedia of South African Post Offices and Postal Agencies*, Volume 4, pub, Ralph F. Putzel, 291p.

van den Hurk, George, 1992, *The Netherlands South African Railway Company and the Postal Service of the South African Republic*, pub. Philatelic Federation of Southern Africa, 15p.

Figure 13. Original Post Office and Railway Station at Waterval Boven ca. 1895.



News from the RMPL...

RMPL OPEN FRIDAYS FOR SUMMER

We are most pleased to announce that the RMPL will be open on Fridays starting with May 7. The hours will be from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. We are going to try this for the Summer months and if we can find a couple of Volunteers in the Fall, we will continue this year-round. With this additional day the RMPL is now open for your use and convenience six days per week. Not many of the other philatelic libraries are able to provide that many days of service – and we do it using Volunteers. We feel that the RMPL is indeed unique.

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SCANDINAVIAN MATERIAL HAS ARRIVED

Quite some time ago the RMPL and the Scandinavian Collector's Club reached an agreement whereby their library would be housed in the RMPL. Material from the Scandinavian

Collector's Club Library would be available for use by all who visit the RMPL. The benefits of such an arrangement are obvious.

The Scandinavian Collector's Club material has arrived and we are in the process of organizing it and making it available for use. It will be some time before it will be cataloged and included in the Card Catalog of the RMPL, but it will be ready for use before cataloging. It will be housed in the "Map Room" as a special collection. Stewart Silverberg will be the Scandinavian Club member who will take care of all mail-out requests. Stop by the RMPL and see what is included in this great addition to the RMPL.

BEGINNING CLASS COMPLETED

The first RMPL class of Adult Beginning Stamp Collectors has completed the 4-week course. They met for 4 consecutive Monday

nights in March. "Graduates" include: Cecilia Antonelli, Carla Barrett, Bill Braukman, Isabel Foster, Donald Lovelace, Pam Lugo, Dick Smith, Ed Villano, Marjorie VonFrantzius. Comments indicated that those participating appreciated the class and the instructors, George Wright, Don Beuthel, and Bill Dunn felt that this was a good start. A few changes are planned for the next time that we offer the class.

We are planning on having another Adult Beginning Class before the end of the year. At this time the exact dates are not known. If you know of someone whom you think might be interested, have them contact the RMPL and get their name on the waiting list now for the next session and we will notify them later regarding the dates of the class.

RMPL PARKING LOT RESURFACED

Thanks to a donation from Phil Beutel and thanks to a great job of negotiating by Dave Capra we now have improved the appearance and convenience of the RMPL building by having the parking lot resurfaced and lined for parking. If you haven't been at the library for some time, you will be as amazed as we are with the improvement in the appearance of the building with the paint job last summer and the parking lot improvements this spring.

Next on the list of exterior improvements planned for this spring is some landscape work on the front and development of a flower garden to improve the appearance of the back portion of our lot. We want to be good neighbors to the residential community behind the library and the weeds that have been growing back there don't make a pleasant view from their front doors. Bill Dunn will be coordinating this project and if you are willing to volunteer to help please contact him at 303-321-8746.

RMPL PRESENCE AT ROMPEX

As has been the custom in the past several years, the RMPL will hold a silent auction at ROMPEX. All types of lots will be available for your bids ranging from single stamps to large assortments. In the past this silent auction has provided funds to pay the bills of the library for one month, so it is a most important part of our annual financial structure. We urge you to take the time to stop by the table and bid high and often.

All of the lots in the auction have been donated to the RMPL for this purpose. If you have material that you would like to donate, it is not too late. Bring the items to the library during our regular business hours, mail the items to the library indicating that they are for the auction, or call the library and make other arrangements.

The RMPL will be making tours of the library available again this year. Tours will leave from the RMPL table at ROMPEX at 10:15 AM on all three days if the show and at 1:30 PM on Friday and Saturday. An additional tour could be available on Sunday afternoon with special arrangements. If you have guests from out of town for ROMPEX urge them to make a visit to the library.

The RMPL will be open from 2-8 on Thursday and from 10-4 on both Friday and Saturday during ROMPEX.

MEMBERSHIP CONTINUES TO GROW

Each time we send out renewal notices we lose a few members but at the same time we gain more new members to replace them, so our total membership continues to grow at a gradual pace. Naturally we could use more new members and here is where the current members can help. Bring a philatelic friend out to the library to see what we have to offer and most frequently they will leave as members of the RMPL. It is the old story - get them here and they will join - so help us by getting them here.

New members for the past 2 months include:

Paul C. Crissman	Daniel R. Mason
Alan J. Liram	Herman Axelrod
Richard Earle	Isabel Foster
Dana McKinney	L. Frederick Moose
Robert Gibson	Tim Hammonds
Nigel Evans	Scott Smith
Donald I. Dhonau	Duane Spidle

PERIODICAL PICKIN'S

by Sergio Lugo

This month's review of the RMPL periodical holdings begins with a memorium of sorts. As many of you know, Mr. Herman (Pat) Herst recently died. Known throughout the philatelic world for his prolific writing and voluble ability, Mr. Herst's contributions to philately will be remembered for their wit, breadth of knowledge, and refreshing style. At a personal level, I don't remember ever meeting Mr. Herst, but I'm sure I probably did because many of my Saturdays were spent entering in and out of Nassau Street's stamp shops, a 5 minute walk from where I grew up in lower Manhattan. One of his philatelic friends said recently, "Pat never let the facts get in the way of a good story." He was one of the great philatelic characters of our time.

An example of Mr. Herst's writing approach is contained in the periodical *HERST'S OUTBURSTS*. Beginning in 1939, the periodical continued through at least 1973. (RMPL holdings are concentrated in the 1960's and early 1970's.) Mr. Herst's expansive claims were noted early in the periodical - the opening caption states,

"this little magazine boasts the largest circulation of any philatelic house organ in the world, over six thousand". A review of any monthly issue reveals a remarkable breadth and scope of content - literature reviews, meters, philatelic scoundrels, catalog reviews and apparently a trick he developed of using captioned items which capture your attention, albeit you can't figure out the topic until you begin reading..

Closer to home, in terms of distance, is a little known periodical that sprang up as the official organ of the Queen City Philatelic Society, a predecessor (I think) of the Denver Stamp Club. The ROCKY MOUNTAIN STAMP is housed in the locked cabinet/files of the RMPL due to scarcity. The bulk of the RMPL holdings of this periodical were donated by John Bloor. Begun in 1895, ROCKY MOUNTAIN STAMP had a life through at least 1897. RMPL holdings end at whole # 30. Replete with advertising pages (a Scott's Catalog could be purchased for \$1.00 and up) its pages were devoted to philosophical issues and considerations of stamp collecting. A review of the membership rolls of the Queen City Philatelic Society, as listed in the periodical, reveal some very distinguished members including Hiram Deats (U. S. revenues authority) and John W. Scott of Scott stamps fame.

The RMPL welcomes the donation of all types of philatelic periodicals from study group newsletters to publications of philatelic societies. See if what you can contribute will add to our holdings of over 600 different periodicals and 30,000 issues.

RMPL SECOND SATURDAY PROGRAMS

Recently the attendance at the Second Saturday at the RMPL programs has been increasing and those attending have been most pleased with the programs presented.

The Second Saturday at the RMPL program for May will be on May 8th starting at 9:00 AM. The program will be presented by Bill Lansky. and the subject will be "DOX History" - the story of those huge flying machines that traveled from Germany mostly to South America. This should be quite an interesting program.

The Second Saturday at the RMPL program for June will be on June 12th starting at 9:00 AM. Steve Schweighofer will present a program on "Emperor Karl the 1st of Austria" - a most interesting time in European history.

As usual the coffee pot will be on and there might be "goodies" available. Why not bring a philatelic friend and see what these programs have to offer. The programs are over by 10:00 AM so there is plenty of time to get back home to do the yard chores or you can stick around the RMPL and listen to members brag about their

latest acquisition and swap lies and tell stories. Not only are these programs quite educational but they provide a great opportunity for some unstructured socialization among the collectors. Most of us who attend regularly really look forward to these Saturday morning get-togethers.

RMPL VERTICAL FILE

by Sherri Jennings

You are looking in the Card Catalog for information on the issues of Rattlesnake Island and you come upon a card that says, "Rattlesnake Island - See Vertical File". What is this thing - Vertical File?

The Vertical File is located in the file cabinets on the west wall of the RMPL and it contains over 600 files full of newspaper articles on subjects ranging from Aden to Zululand.

Through very hard work on the part of Don Beuthel and several other Volunteers who have been culling articles from not only the philatelic press but from public newspapers as well, the Vertical File has grown immensely from a small beginning. We have quite a large collection of articles on Air Mail, Cancellations, China, Locals and Private Posts, and Postal History. We even have (so far) one article each on such esoteric topics as Aztecs, Fiume, Jubaland, Rio Muni, and Sherlock Holmes.

If there is a topic you can't find in the Vertical File, write an article on that topic and we will be happy to add your article to our collection. The article will be there long after we all have gone. You could educate future generations of philatelists.

Remember, when you visit the library, to glance over the offerings in the Vertical File. It just might have the information you are looking for!

DONATIONS TO RMPL CONTINUE

We are most happy to receive a very nice monetary donation from Mady Gay Kassanoff in memory of her Father, Benjamin Kassanoff. When Mady came in to make the donation she shared a few stories with us about when she was a young girl her father used to drag her from stamp store to stamp store in New York in hopes that she would catch the collecting bug - but to no avail. She just never became interested in the hobby. Currently she is a librarian and she said that she could think of no better way to honor her father and his lifetime love of stamp collecting than to contribute to the RMPL. All of the funds which we receive as memorial contributions or as gifts to commemorative some special occasion are put into a special fund which is used to purchase new books for the RMPL collection. Keep this in mind when such an occasion occurs,

The RMPL now owns a scanner. Phil Beutel of Colorado Springs recently donated a UMAX, Astra 600P scanner and a HP Deskjet 660C Printer to the RMPL. I was just about ready to put a scanner on our wish list when it arrived.

Donations of books, periodicals, and money continue to arrive at a rate that we would never have imagined. A great many of you provide copies of publications on a monthly basis and I'm not sure that we ever officially recognize your contributions. We thank you never-the-less. During the past several months we have received donations from: Alan Hofsetz, Don Beuthel, Bill Dunn,

If your name was not included we apologize. On a few occasions donations are processed before being recorded and as a result your name may not be included in the list of donors. We greatly appreciate each and every donation.

The RMPL has a "Public Charity", 501(c)(3) status with the IRS thus the fair market value of your donation may be deductible on your tax return. We try to acknowledge each donation with a letter. If you did not receive such a letter please contact the RMPL Secretary, Bill Dunn and he will see that you receive the letter.

RMPL WISH LIST

The RMPL wants to thank many of you for responding to our previous Wish Lists and urges that you consider donating any of the following materials that we would be delighted to receive:

Power Mac or iMac
Zip Drive for above
Kodak Carousel Slide Projector Trays (80's or 140's)
Stock Books or stock pages
Mint U. S. Postage

WHAT'S HAPPENING at the RMPL "come and enjoy the activities"

MAY 1999

Mondays: May 3, 10, 17, 24 Open 10-4
Tuesdays: May 4, 11, 18, 25 Open 10-4
Wednesdays: May 5, 12, 19, 26 Open 10-4
Thursdays: May 6, 13, 20, 27 Open 2-8
Fridays: May 7, 14, 21, 28 Open 10-4
Saturdays: May 1, 8, 15, 22, Open 10-4
May 1 - Meeting - 10:00 AM
Scandinavian Collector's Club
May 5 - Aurora Stamp Club - 6:30 Trading
7:30 Meeting and Program
May 6 - Meeting - 7:00 PM - RMPL Board
May 8 - Second Saturday at the RMPL
9:00 AM
Program by Bill Lansky - "DOX History"
May 8 - Meeting - 2:00
Universal Ship Cancellation Society
USS Colorado Chapter
May 12 - Meeting - 7:00 PM
Denver Germany Stamp Club
May 22 - Meeting - 2:00 PM
China Stamp Society
May 29 - RMPL CLOSED
Memorial Day Weekend
see article above
May 31 - RMPL CLOSED - Memorial Day Weekend

JUNE 1999

Mondays: June 7, 14, 21, 28 Open 10-4
Tuesdays: June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Open 10-4
Wednesdays: June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Open 10-4
Thursdays: June 3, 10, 17, 24 Open 2-8
Fridays: June 4, 11, 18, 25 Open 10-4
Saturdays: June 5, 12, 19, 26 Open 10-4
June 2 - Aurora Stamp Club - 6:30 Trading
7:30 Meeting and Program

June 5 - Meeting - 10:00 AM
Scandinavian Collector's Club
June 9 - Meeting - 7:00 PM
Denver Germany Stamp Club
June 12 - Second Saturday at the RMPL
9:00 AM - Program by Steve Schweighofer
"Emperor Karl the 1st of Austria"
June 12 - Meeting - 11:00 AM
Rocky Mountain Aero Philatelists
June 12 - Meeting - 2:00 PM
Universal Ship Cancellation Society
USS Colorado Chapter
June 22 - Meeting - 7:30 PM
ROMPEX Committee
June 26 - Meeting - 2:00 PM
China Stamp Society

Scribblings is published bi-monthly by the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library, 2038 So. Pontiac Way, Denver, CO, 80224.

Donald G. Beuthel
Editor

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