



The Maine Philatelist

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Whole No. 133

The story of the Christmas Seal

By Mike Brown

This is the story of a piece of paper, a tiny piece of paper the size and shape of a postage stamp. Yes, this is the story of a piece of paper and its effect on the destiny of millions of people. How that little stamp, or seal as we now call it, came into the limelight is a great story, as is the story of the former Philadelphia newspaper, the *North American*, which helped to make it possible.

All of us, at one time or another in our lives, reach a day when all our hopes and ambitions totter on the edge of failure. And it was such a time, that bleak October afternoon in 1907, when two people faced each other across a desk. "Well, Emily, see what you can do. We're down to our last dollar, and unless \$300 can somehow be raised, we'll have to close down and turn out these poor sufferers to die -- to spread even more death before they go. You've done a lot of fund raisers for good causes, and I hope you'll find a way this time." That's what Dr. Joseph P. Wales told Emily Bissell that day in October.

For three years, Dr. Wales and a few other Wilmington, Delaware physicians had kept an open-air tuberculosis shack going near Brandywine. The shack sheltered eight charity tuberculosis patients, a nurse, and a cook. But now, all efforts were about to be lost for lack of money.

Supporting that tiny outpost of health had been a hard and

difficult job. Public opinion still thought tuberculosis was hereditary and incurable. For centuries it had topped all other death causes throughout the world. Most people thought of it as something that couldn't be curbed, like wind or lightning, perhaps a sign of divine wrath at human wrongdoing! So why waste time and money? Why try to save TB victims? Tuberculosis was called the White Plague, the mystery murderer. If

you had it, you were doomed. However, Emily Bissell belonged to the minority who thought something could be done about it. And she knew the treatment at Brandywine had shown encouraging results. But to convince others wasn't easy and conviction was the first step toward contributions. Where was she going to seek them?

While wondering, she suddenly remembered a story called "A Christmas Stamp." It had been written by Jacob Riis and concerned a postal clerk in Denmark, who in 1904 had a new idea. He had origi-

nated a small stamp which was sold in post offices, not for postage, but to raise money for a sanatorium for tuberculous children, and it brought him many times the amount sought. "Why not get one out to raise money for the shack?" said Emily Bissell. "On letters and packages it would serve both as a holiday greeting and a bearer of good news to the people of Delaware."

And why shouldn't the Delaware Red Cross, of which she

Continued on page 4



This pane of the 1946 Christmas seals contained photographs of (from upper left): Jacob Riis, Emily Bissell, E.A. Van Valkenburg, and Leigh Mitchell Hodges.

The Maine Philatelist is published quarterly by the
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Website: <http://www.ainop.com/users/max/mps.htm>

The purpose of the Society, a non-profit Maine corporation, is to promote philately in the Pine Tree State. Membership is open to anyone. Membership applications are available from the Secretary, listed below.

Dues are \$5.00 per fiscal year (ending in June).

Life Membership is also available.

Contact the Secretary for details.

**Articles for publication should be sent to the
President/Editor at address below.**

OFFICERS

President

Dr. Everett L. Parker (2003)
719 Moosehead Lake Rd.
Greenville, ME 04441-9727
(207) 695-3163 (Voice and Fax)
email - eparker@midmaine.com

Vice President

Mr. Jim Foote III (2004)
P.O. Box 16
Manchester, ME 04351-0016

Secretary

Mr. Bruce Hazelton (2003)
P.O. Box 67A
Cumberland Center, ME 04021

Treasurer

Mr. Rick Stambaugh (2004)
18 Elmwood Ct.
N. Berwick, ME 03906
email - rickstambaugh@xpressamerica.net

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PUBLISHING SCHEDULE

The Maine Philatelist is distributed to members in January, April, July and October of each year. Below is a list of deadlines for each issue and the anticipated mailing date. While deadline for copy (articles) is firm, the anticipated mailing date is just that -- a "best guess" of mailing.

ISSUE COVER DATE	DEADLINE FOR COPY	JOURNAL TO PRINTER	ANTICIPATED MAILING DATE
January	Dec. 15	Dec. 30	Jan. 15
April	March 15	March 30	April 15
July	June 15	June 30	July 15
October	Sept. 15	Sept. 30	Oct. 15

Maine stamp club meetings



*Stamp clubs in Maine are invited to become members
of the Maine Philatelic Society. We will publish, free of
charge, meeting information and locations.*

WATERVILLE STAMP CLUB

The club meets on the first and third Friday from September to May and on the third Friday only during June, July and August. Meetings are from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Kennebec Valley Technical College (KVTC) on Western Avenue in Fairfield (Exit 35 of Interstate 95). For information, call 872-5107. Nonmembers are invited to attend.

BELFAST STAMP CLUB

The club meets on the third Thursday of the month at noon. The location changes each month. For information, call Dick Gerry, president, at 866-3583.

YORK COUNTY STAMP CLUB

The club meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Sanford Masonic Hall, Elm Street, Sanford. Usual events include raffle, auction, presentations, refreshments, and an occasional visit from a stamp dealer. Dues are \$5 per year. For information, contact Secretary Tracey Levasseur, 329 Ross Corner Rd., Shapleigh, ME 04076.

UNION RIVER STAMP CLUB

The Union River Stamp Club meets the third Thursday of each month from April through November at the Ellsworth Library, beginning at 6:30 p.m. For information, contact Eric Beal at 827-2686 or Eric.Beal@umit.maine.edu.

KENNEBEC VALLEY STAMP AND COLLECTOR CLUB OF AUGUSTA

The Kennebec Valley Stamp and Collector Club meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at the Central Maine Power Company headquarters on Edison Drive in Augusta. Meetings are from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. For additional information, call Shirley MacKay at 622-7978, or contact by email at kildonan@prexar.com.

Maine Exchange Offices

The Laws and Regulations of the Post Office Department in 1852 name Robbinston, Calais, and Houlton as offices for the exchange of mail with the Canadian Maritime provinces and Newfoundland. Instructions to postmasters were to stamp "U.S.TATES" on all letters sent into the provinces, and to mark all paid letters received from the provinces with the word "PAID" and the amount of the U.S. and provincial postage paid, both in red ink, and to mark all unpaid letters with the amount of such postage in black ink.

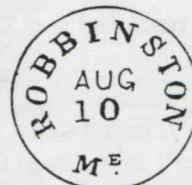
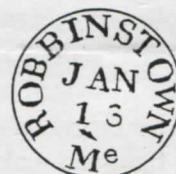
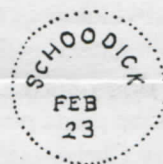
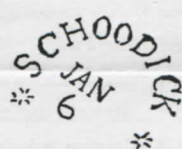
Of these three offices, Robbinston is the most interesting. Established as Schoodick (Scodie, Scoodic) in 1796, it may have been called "Brewer's" for a time, after John Brewer, the postmaster. In 1811 the name was changed to Robbinstown and in 1834 to Robbinston. This office exchanged mail with New Brunswick long before 1852, for covers have been seen originating at St. Andrews, which passed through Schoodick in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and bore the Schoodick postmark.

The first type of postmark is one of three found in Maine where the name is arranged in a semi-circle. But one cover is known, which was addressed to Wiscasset, and this cover reposed at one time in the collection of W.B. O'Connor (1940s), who provided a tracing of the postmark. The cover is dated 1802. The second type, the dotted circle, has been seen used in 1805, 1808-1810. The next type, with "town" spelling, is in blue and dated in January 1834. This must have been at about the end of its use, for we have the "ton" type, also in blue and in the same month and year. This fourth type was used in red from January 1835 to September 1852, so far as covers have been recorded. The dates of the fifth and sixth types are not known. No. 5 carried a 3¢ stamp of 1851, and No. 6 carried a 3¢ of 1861.

The office at Calais, or Scodic Falls, was established on February 4, 1807. The earliest Calais postmark in the record is the straight line, unusual because it shows the year date. This has been seen in black in 1830 and 1832, and in red in 1830-31. Also, it has been seen in both colors and without the year date in 1832. The second type is peculiar to Calais, as no other office used the same form of abbreviation for the state name. This was used in both black and red from 1835 to 1851, the largest use of black being in 1842-44. The small straight line dated May 6 cannot be year dated. The fourth type is known only in red in 1853, 1854, and 1856. The fifth type was used in black from 1857 through 1861, and in red in 1859.

The office in Houlton was established in 1826. Manuscript postmarks have been seen dated in 1831, 1832 and 1835. The first handstamp type is recorded from 1834 to 1851. The color used was red except that two covers are recorded in black in November and December 1839, and blue from November 1839 to July 1840. It is known that many of the large number of covers recorded came from the provinces. Of the second type, few covers have been seen, used, in red in 1851 and in black in 1850, 1853, 1858, and 1859.

It is not to be understood that all of these postmarks were used on mail from the provinces, because that is not known to be so. It is probably true, however. They are the earliest postmarks which might have been so used down to the time of the Civil War. ☐



CALAIS, ME. MARCH 6 1830 CALAIS M. May 6.



The story of the Christmas seal

Continued from page 1

was secretary, sponsor it? There was no time to be lost. Her Red Cross associates liked the idea, but their fund restrictions didn't include a postage stamp. The national organization permitted the use of the familiar emblem, but the Postmaster General wouldn't permit the sale at stamp windows. Besides, he added a prediction of failure. She wasn't going to give up, however, and finally she convinced two of her women friends to stand good for \$20 each. She talked to a printer and he agreed to get out 50,000 stamps as a total order and await results before payment. Miss Bissell sketched the design -- a holly garland centered by a red cross with "Merry Christmas" written below.

Then she started out to arouse public interest. Local organizations offered their cooperation, but, with one voice, the advertising and publicity experts tried to persuade her from attempting such a foolish proposition. Prettier Christmas stickers could be bought for one-tenth the cost, they said, and fund raising at a penny pace just didn't make sense.

Then a group of women volunteers went to work putting the stamps on small envelopes, bearing this legend: "Twenty-five Christmas stamps, one penny apiece, issued by the Delaware Red Cross to stamp out the white plague. Put this stamp with message bright on every Christmas letter. Help the tuberculosis fight and make the New Year better. These stamps do not carry any kind of mail, but any kind of mail will carry them."

At noon on December 7, in the lobby of Wilmington's main post office, this country's first sale of Christmas seals began. That lobby became a hallway to hope. Many stopped to look, and some bought. The day's sale came to a little less than \$25. The \$300 goal was yet to be reached. So on December 11, Miss Bissell took a train for nearby Philadelphia to see if the *North American*, that city's leading newspaper, would print something about what they were trying to do.

The Philadelphia *North American* was a great crusading newspaper that inspired its readers to action. The editor and publisher at that time was an eminent leader and thinker, Mr. E.A. Van Valkenburg. He had come to Philadelphia from the coal mining regions of Pennsylvania where he well knew the scourge of TB.

As is often the case, not knowing whom to contact, Miss Bissell was shunted around by the receptionist, and finally reached the office of the Sunday editor, of all places. Well, old Charlie Smith, the Sunday editor, listened to her story, but like many other editors, automatically said, "No." He

was polite, but visibly shocked at the thought of coupling "Merry Christmas" with a monstrous curse. He was sorry, but he didn't want to be a party to any such hook-up. As Miss Bissell was leaving his office, she asked the receptionist if Mr. Leigh Mitchell Hodges, who wrote the "Optimist" column, happened to be in. She always read his column and if he wasn't too busy, she did want to meet him. "Is she good-looking?" Hodges asked the office boy. "Sure!" he replied. "Then show her in," Hodges said. That was the decisive moment.

Fate makes strange moves on the chessboard of so-called chance. Neither of these two had the least notion that their meeting might lead to anything in particular. He hadn't heard about the stamps-seals, and she hadn't really planned to tell him about the project. But as sometimes happens, a few casual words were to change the tread of human events. He asked why she had come to the *North American*, so she told him of the Brandywine shack, of the Christmas seal, and of the sale in the Wilmington Post Office.

Hodges asked to look at the seals, so she took a sheet of them from her handbag and showed them to her. There's no accounting for some things, but it was as plain as day that what he saw wasn't a piece of pin-holed paper, but a sort of flaming banner to head the fight against a dreaded foe. Half snatching it, he tore down the stairs two at a time, and barged into the office of the editor-in-chief.

"Here's a way to wipe out tuberculosis," he said, slamming the sheet on the big desk. "What the heck do you mean?" said Van Valkenburg. "Just look -- look at them -- a penny apiece -- within everyone's reach. Think how they'll carry the news of what people can do for themselves! What a slogan, 'Stamp Out Tuberculosis.'" Hearing the story, Van Valkenburg picked them up and thought a moment. "Tell Miss Bissell to come in," he said. And when she walked in the door, he said, "Miss Bissell, we'll take 50,000 stamps."

An editorial conference was called immediately and ordered crackled. Hodges was instructed to give all his time to daily stories and editorials. Edmondson, the advertising manager, was instructed to secure the cooperation of all stores, setting up booths for the sale of seals and urging advertisers to mention them in their copy. All the "make it known" methods of a modern newspaper were set going -- stories on page one, endorsements from civil and political leaders, from Teddy Roosevelt, Secretary Root, Secretary Taft, Cardinal Gibbons; in fact, it seemed as though all the people responded. The Postmaster General approved Christmas seal sales in post office lobbies. Before the first batch came to Wilmington, the

whole city and suburbs knew about them. Offers to buy and to help poured in.

Two days after the seals arrived, 30,000 were sold, enough to make up the needed \$300. The Wilmington printer was swamped, so a Philadelphia firm was enlisted. Soon it was seen that "Merry Christmas" would be deadlined before the demand dwindled, so "Happy New Year" was added to the design. The readers' loyal interest in the *North American* went to town, and the war on TB was on in earnest. A few weeks later, Miss Bissell telephoned from Wilmington. "It's hard to believe, sir, but we've just finished counting and we have \$3,000." The shack was saved.

The surprising success of that experiment, 10 times the sum they hoped to raise, prompted the thought that a nationwide effort during the next holiday season might be worthwhile. The National Red Cross sponsored the 1908 stamp. To pave the way for this, Miss Bissell sent out letters and news releases to 6,000 newspapers, personally advancing the cost of this publicity because she was certain the returns would far more than cover expenses. Again, the *North American* led the parade with an initial order for three million of the little stickers. Two days after the sale started, the Washington headquarters of the Red Cross had to hire 20 extra clerks to handle rush orders. This first nationwide sale brought in \$135,000.

But despite such a record, there were still those who doubted the lasting power of the idea. It would soon fade out as a passing fad, they said.

In 1910, the Red Cross asked the National Tuberculosis Association to manage the annual campaigns. The word stamp was dropped to avoid confusion with postage and it became officially the Christmas Seal.

In 1919, the NTA became the seal's sole sponsor and in 1920 the Red Cross symbol was replaced by the adaptation of the Lorraine Cross -- the double-barred cross -- official international emblem of all TB organizations, and now featured on each issue of this biggest little thing in the world. Its cherry message has prompted the development of unmatched popular interest in the support of the ceaseless war against TB. More than any other single factor, the Christmas Seal is responsible for the diligent work these many years carried on by the TB associations in all the U.S. states and territories.

The great change the Christmas Seal has brought in one of the widest fields of human loss and misery must be credited to the fact that it has given everyone a chance to be of real help in the defense and spread of health and happiness. And that is the story of the Christmas Seal -- the biggest little thing on earth. A tiny seal -- a great cause. ☐

Are YOU on the Internet?

Here is a list of MPS members with e-mail

Albert Aldham
bertaldham@webtv.net
Joe Antizzo
Joeantizzo@aol.com
Louis C. Bakula
grampsusn@aol.com
Robert (Bob) Barker
rebarker@rebarker.com
George Barner
georgebarner@adelphia.net
Al Barth
cfecat@megalink.net
Chuck Brand
shakerdom@hotmail.com
Tom Cieslinski
tomciesl@midmaine.com
Gary Clark
gclark1@tampabay.rr.com
Nancy B. Clark
nbc@Cape.com
David Costain
dcostain@midmaine.com
Roger Curran
rdcnrc@evenlink.com

Dr. John Engle jengle@gwi.net
Jim Forte
jimforte@postalthistory.com
Dan Goodwin
dgoodwi3@maine.rr.com
Robert Gross
bobgrossrc@adelphia.net
Gary W. Hibbard
ghibbar1@maine.rr.com
Terence Hines
TerenceHines@aol.com
Alf Jordan
ajordan1@maine.rr.com
Kelvin Kindahl
kanda@javanet.com
Dick Laetsch
precancel@aol.com
Steve LaForge
stephenlaforge@netscape.net
Rick Lancaster
modcover@gwi.net
James Larsen
larsenj@c2i2.com

Philippe C. Lebel
PCLEBEL@hotmail.com
Rev. Robert Leon
aslanleon@altavista.com
Max Lynds
Max@pwless.net
Paul R. Maynard
Maynard25@Charter.net
Vince McDermott
vjmcdermott@aol.com
Andrew J. Moran
amoran66@yahoo.com
Ed Muzzy
edmuzzy17@aol.com
Robert W. Olmsted
cal@americanletters.org
Everett L. Parker
eparker@midmaine.com
Phil Peverada
peverada@midcoast.com
Thurlow Pitts
antares23@hypernet.com
Jack Pooler
car99@comcast.net

Steven Pottle
sppride@aol.com
Gil Roderick
destamps@acadia.net
William W. Sammis
cds13@cornell.edu
John E. Sawhill Jr.
bsawhill@suscom-mainse.net
Art Scarano
a.j.scarano@att.net
Barry Serpell
serpellmaine@aol.com
Roland Simard
manacorp@aol.com
Henry Stevens
hstevens@stamps.win.net
Henry G. Turnbull
AZNPTHGT1@webtv.net
Edwin F. Whitney
edfwhitney@yahoo.com
Richard Williams
richwilljr@adelphia.net
Kennedy L. Wilson
k-mew@midcoast.com

Maine Cover of the Quarter

A postal history feature
by Rob Washburn
of Skowhegan

Page.....		REGISTERED PACKAGE RECEIPT.		A penalty of \$300 is fixed by law for using this Card for other than Official Business.	
Post Office Department, Official Business.		Post Office at		Stamp of Receiving Office	
Receipt on other side and return this card by NEXT MAIL, without cover,					
To		P. M. at		and date of Return.	
		Branch			
		County of			
		State of			
				5-1630	

The above Registered Package Receipt has a March 12, 1897 Armstrong, Quebec cancel and a rare March 17, 1897 Branch, Maine cancel. The Branch Post Office was only in existence for six years and has a scarcity rating of 8 per *The Post Offices of Maine: A Rarity Guide*.

(If you have a candidate for Maine Cover of the Quarter, please send a photocopy of your cover against a black background to Rob Washburn, P.O. Box 840, Skowhegan, ME 04976).

Post Offices of Maine

A regular
feature



This photo, taken from a post card, shows the post office at Alna, Maine. According to Bruce Hazelton's *The Post Offices of Maine, A Rarity Guide*, this post office was established in Lincoln County on April 1, 1811 and is still operating. In this photograph, taken before 1908, the post office building is at right. Do YOU have a photo of an old post office? Send it to the editor with as much information as you know about it.

York County stamp show to be held on November 1 in Kittery

YORKPEX, the annual York County Stamp Club show, will be held on November 1 at the Day's Inn Conference Center on the Route 1 Bypass in Kittery. The show will be open from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

A total of 10 dealers will be on hand for the show, which will also include special exhibits, a post office and cacheted cover and cancel. A lunch counter will be available at the show. For additional information, contact Rick Stambaugh, 18 Elmwood Ct., N. Berwick, ME 03906. You may also reach him by electronic mail at rickstambaugh@xpressamerica.com.

Secretary's Report *Bruce Hazelton* Secretary

ADDRESS CHANGES

Dick Laetsch, 3 Shady Creek Lane, Scarborough, ME 04074

Rev. Robert Leon, 641 W. Cholla Ave., Ajo, AZ 85321-2204

Paul H. Fenton, 49 W. Chops Point Rd., Bath, ME 04530

THE CLASSIFIEDS

Classified advertisements are free to members. You may use this space to buy and sell, trade or swap. When sending an advertisement, please mark it for the Classifieds and indicate how many issues you wish it to appear. All ads will appear twice and be removed unless otherwise indicated.

WANTED

Wanted: modern (since 1970) U.S. covers. I am especially looking for junk mail transportation coil PNC covers, Express mail, postage dues, insured mail, Certified mail, auxiliary markings. Rob Washburn, P.O. Box 840, Skowhegan, ME 04976-0840. (4-03)

Wanted: Maine hunting and fishing stamps on license. Will pay a minimum of \$20 each for every license I need. Also want Maine (and other New England states) Old Home Week seals. Terence Hines, P.O. Box 629, Chappaqua, NY 10514-0629. (4-03)

Information needed to further research on Maine NARROW GAUGE RPOs. Need RPO, month, day, year, train no. ME 4 BAR COLORED cancels, need P.O. name, month, day, year, time, color. Will respond to all information received. Bruce L. Corey, 108 Marilyn Ave., Westbrook, ME 04092-4624. (4-03)

Wanted to buy: Maine fancy cancels on cover or postal cards, stampless to 1920 only. Let me know what you have. Gil Roderick, 52 Fern St., Bangor, ME 04401. (4-03)

Collector is looking for covers from Houlton Air Force Base Station. If you have same, please contact me. Telephone: 538-9788 (home) or 532-2291 (work). My e-mail is max@ainop.com Max Leigh Lynds, P.O. Box 761, Houlton, ME 04730-0761. (4-03)

Wanted: perfins used in Maine, on cover or off (with good town cancels). Special interest in AJS (Auburn) and RB (Bangor) -- users not yet identified. Will buy or trade. Vince McDermott, 22 Beech Dr., Brunswick, ME 04011. (4-03)

We urgently need quantities of used Japanese stamps from the period of 1876 (Old Koban Series) through 1955. Dealer stocks, accumulations, bundle material from this period needed for our specialist customers. Will buy anything and everything (used only) at fair prices or will select only what we most urgently need at near to full Scott retail. Prompt payment always. Forty-five years in the trade! John B. Head, P.O. Box 7, Bethel, ME 04217. (4-03)

Wanted: Maine Express Covers (and others): with labels, hand-stamps, manuscript markings or cornercards. Express Company

labels and stamps (such as for newspapers, parcels or free franking) off cover also sought. William W. Sammis (Bill), 436 Thomas Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850-9653. (4-03)

Wanted: Early USN postcards of battleships with ship cancels before 1920 (called classics): BB2 USS *Massachusetts*, BB4 USS *Iowa*, BB5 USS *Kearsage*, BB7 USS *Illinois*, BB8 USS *Alabama*, BB9 USS *Wisconsin*. I have other BB covers and postcards for trade. Also interested in topicals, especially flowers on stamps, and Antarctic stamps. Louis C. Bakula, P.O. Box 150, West Poland, ME 04291-0150. (4-03)

Seeking exhibit quality Andover, Maine material from the period 1 January 1913 through 30 June 1916. Postal cards, postal stationery, covers, parcel wrappers, postage dues, precancels, perfins, booklet panes, multi-denominational covers, i.e., overseas or international uses, postal history, post office forms, postal item relating to Andover, Maine. Single items to large lots. Send photocopy with price. Postage refunded if not purchased. R.M. Arndt, P.O. Box 60292, Midland, TX 79711-0292; email: Texas432@webtv.net (4-04)

FOR SALE

Precancel approvals: town and types 15¢, classics, 1922-26 general, bicents, prexies, perfins available. Buro approvals starting at 10¢ each. Good mixed precancel lots. 2,000-\$35.00; 10,000-\$145.00. Mixed buros, 2,000-\$35.00, 10,000-\$145.00. Dick Laetsch, 108 Ashswamp Road, Scarborough, ME 04074. email: precancel@aol.com; website: www.precanceledstamps.com (4-03)

For sale: DPO, Macy, ME - Doane 1906 on PPC, Rarity 8. First \$75.00 takes it. Carl A. Burnham, RR1, Box 559, Limington, ME 04046. Telephone 637-2871. (4-03)

For sale -- helping friend dispose of father's collection. Sheets, blocks, booklets, assorted postage at face. Airmail, singles, blocks half of catalogue value. Mint postal cards, postal reply cards. Please ask by Scott number. Charles Boudreau, 37 Center St., P.O. Box 498, Machias, ME 04654-0498. Telephone 255-3918. (4-03).

Here's how you can help your society ...

Where did the year 2003 go? By the time most of you receive this issue of *The Maine Philatelist*, it will be nearing Halloween, and then it's a mad dash to Thanksgiving and Christmas. There is a saying that the years go faster the older you get, and I can certainly attest to the truth of that adage. With that in mind, I need your help in making my job as publications editor of this organization a bit easier.

Although I've said it a number of times, I need to mention again a few "ground rules" for submitting articles for publication. Likely you've become tired of hearing about it, but for those who don't know, my wife and I own a very busy publishing and printing business in addition to my working full-time at a medium-size museum where I serve as executive director. It's worth mentioning again that if you need to reach me during working hours (8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time), this number rings directly to my office, and only I or my assistant will answer -- (207) 695-2909.

With a very busy printing office, it's imperative that when you send an email with an article for this publication that you note that fact, plus provide your name. Believe it or not, I usually receive more than one article a month with no byline and no indication for which journal it is intended. Please keep in mind that I edit four philatelic journals and we print well over 25. And please keep in mind that I do maintain the mailing list, but renewals should be sent to Bruce Hazelton.

When you send an email change or address change, please tell me if it's for the Maine Philatelic Society. I maintain several mailing lists, and it tends to get confusing when someone emails

and says, "Hi, this is Joe, I've got a new email address, please change it in your records." Joe, of course, knows which organization he's referring to, and likely thinks I will instantly recall his name. In most instances, I will recall a name, but when one works with hundreds of people, it can be confusing.

When sending articles by email, you can provide scans as attachments, but don't include them "in-line" with the article. Please send them as TIFF or JPEG images at 300dpi. If you send an article by snail mail, please send crisp and clear photocopies of illustrations and not ratty, third generation reproductions. We can't improve poor quality, and it shows when the article is printed. And most of all, please check your article for accuracy BEFORE sending it. Every quarter with the various publications, I receive updates and corrections after an article is received, and sometimes two or three. Please edit your copy and review it, *then* send it. It gets very confusing here when several publications are closing and heading to print at the same time. And most of all, we need articles for printing in *The Maine Philatelist*. Please tell me about research you are doing, or write about your favorite cover, develop a history of your local post office and send copies of some early and latter covers from that post office, along with a current photograph. This type of information is very useful to researchers and our fellow members.

And most of all, be involved in this organization. There are positions which need filling, and a number of jobs and tasks which need to be handled by more than a few people. Help is always needed, and it's up to YOU to provide it! Have a happy holiday season -- remember, snow is just around the corner! ☺

Maine Philatelic Society
719 Moosehead Lake Rd.
Greenville, ME 04441-9727



IMPORTANT NOTE
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name on the mailing list
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