

## NTSS 2014 REPORT

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The American Topical Association held its annual National Topical Stamp Show 27–29 June 2014, at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel. The theme this year was “Gateway to Topicals,” word play on the famous St. Louis Gateway Arch landmark. The Biology Unit held its annual meeting at this show on Saturday. See the meeting report by Chris Dahle on page 143.

I enjoy the NTSS the most of all the shows I attend and I wish all of our members would pay it a visit at least once. The dealers have a wide variety of materials, and not just for the topical collector. But many of them specialize in topical material and most have their items arranged so that it is easy for a collector to search for their topic without having to wade through endless unrelated stuff.

Personally, I enjoy looking through boxes of mixed covers and postcards and I have discovered many treasured items this way. However, I was so busy at the show this year that I did not have a chance to look through any dealer offerings until Saturday afternoon. There are so many events happening that one person cannot participate in all of them. In addition, as one of the organizers for SEAPEX this year, I was busy pursuing dealers and exhibitors to support that show. And as co-chair of the NTSS to be held next year in Portland, Oregon, I was engaged in meetings and coordination to prepare for it as well.

But enough of my whining. One of the main reasons I have so much fun at this show is the opportunity to see old friends and meet new ones. The ATA also provides additional social activities that most other shows do not. For example, on the Thursday before the show they offer a half-day tour and on Monday following the show, there is a full day tour involving local attractions. This year the Thursday tour was around St. Louis. We visited the restored post office and customs house and its museum and toured some of the St. Louis neighborhoods. Especially interesting was the tour of the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis. This spectacular building is a true work of art.

For the Monday tour we traveled to Hannibal, Missouri, to visit the Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum. The Executive Director, Henry Sweets, who is also a stamp collector and philatelic judge, gave us a personal tour and during lunch, gave a presentation on stamps and covers relating to Samuel Clemens and his literary creations based on items from his own collection, many of which are unique.

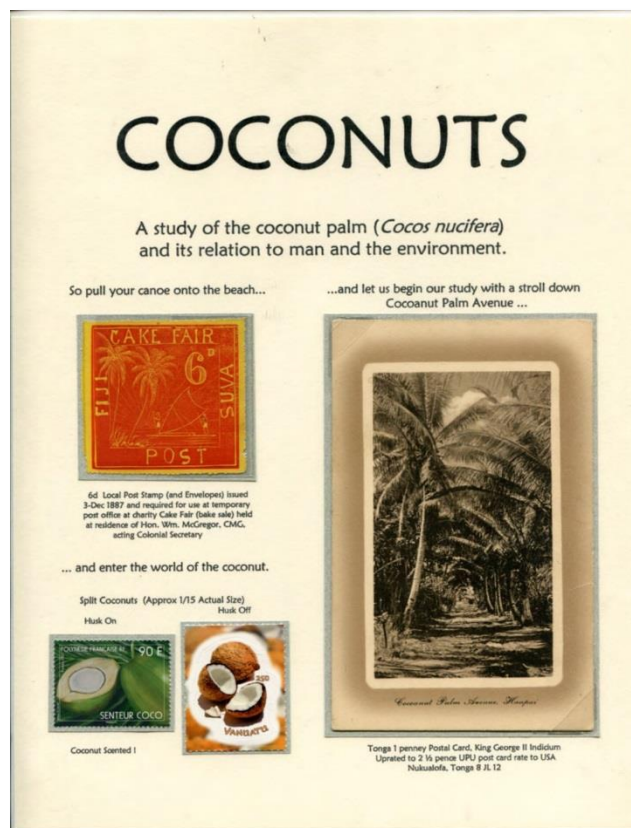


Mark Twain Boyhood Home  
L-R: Larry Davidson, David Kent, and Kathy Kirk

Now about the show itself. The bourse had 33 dealers mainly from the Midwest, but with a couple from as far away as California and Florida. As I mentioned, I did not have a chance to shop much, but I did visit each dealer and they were quite friendly and spent time chatting with me. I sensed that the attendance was lower than usual, so perhaps they had a little more time to talk instead of being busy with many other customers.

There were 31 competitive exhibits consisting of 137 frames. No less than 15 of these exhibits were of biological or medical themes. In addition, there were **five novice exhibitors** at this show. In most national shows it is atypical to find more than one novice. Four of the novice exhibitors showed biological themes and all of them received awards at Silver-Bronze, or above, with one meriting a Vermeil. This achievement is almost unheard of at a national show. This remarkable showing is a terrifically positive sign for topical collecting and the philatelic jury was considerably impressed.

The Biology Unit Award went to Vincent DeLuca for his exhibit *The Olive—Olea europaea*.

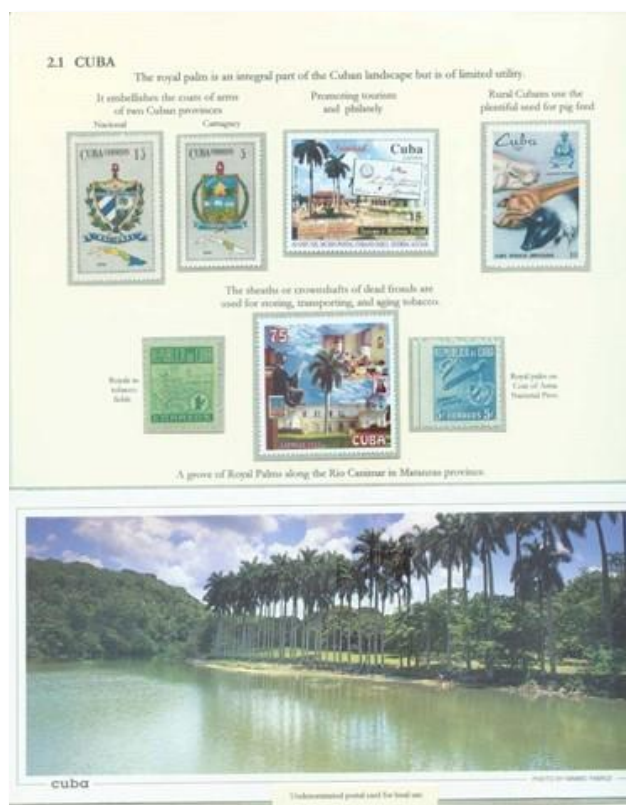
Page from *The Olive—Olea europaea*Title Page from *Coconuts*

Former Unit member, Vincent DeLuca, won the Grand award with *The Olive—Olea europaea*, a five-frame thematic exhibit on the origin and evolution of the olive tree and its uses. This honor makes the exhibit eligible for the Champion of Champions competition at the APS StampShow in Hartford, Connecticut, 21–24 August.

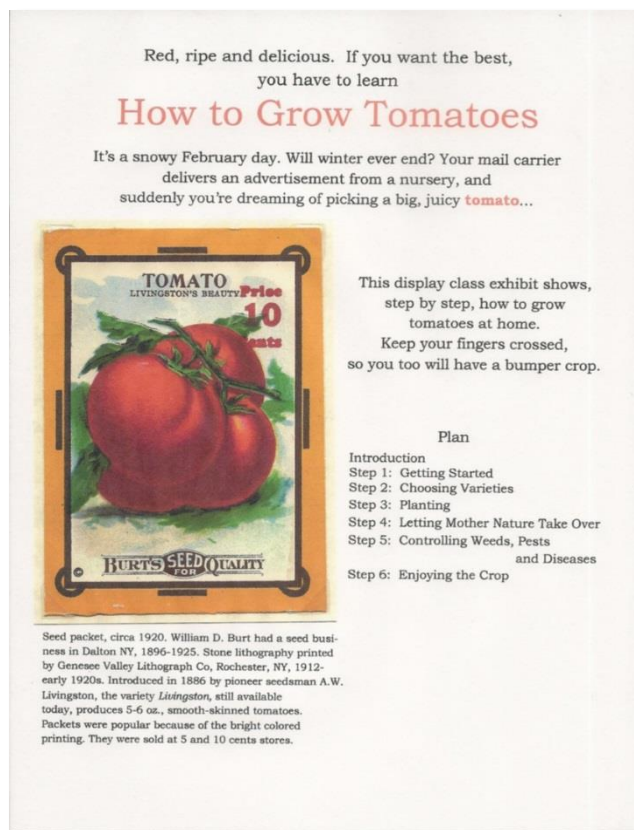
Another former Unit member, Phillip J. Stager, received the Reserve Grand award for his eight-frame thematic exhibit *Coconuts*, a study of the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) and its relation to man. Phil also won the One-frame Grand award with *The Royal Palm*, a geographical study of this landscape palm. The One-frame Grand qualifies this exhibit to compete for the One-Frame Champion of Champions award at the APS AmeriStamp Expo in Riverside, California, 13–15 February 2015.

Botany was again well represented by Unit member Chris Dahle's five-frame thematic exhibit titled *Exploring the Evolution of Plants*, which received a Vermeil award.

Continuing with the botany theme, Unit member Dawn Hamman received a Vermeil medal, the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors Award of Honor, and the AAPE Best Title Page award for her one-frame display exhibit, *How to Grow Tomatoes*.

Page from *The Royal Palm*



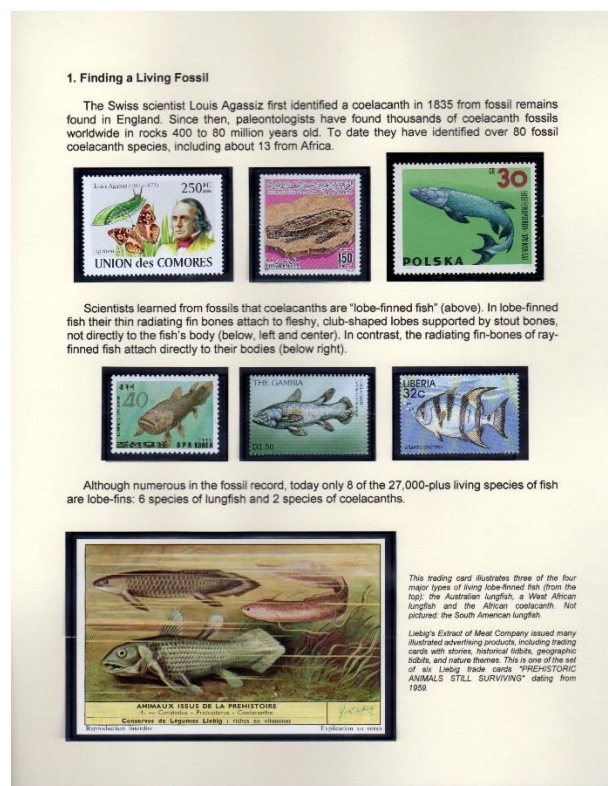
Page from *Exploring the Evolution of Plants*Title Page from *How to Grow Tomatoes*

After botany, the next most popular biological area was mammals with three exhibits. Robert Mather received a Gold medal for *The Donkey*, a ten-frame thematic exhibit on the history of this animal. Dennis Carman received a Vermeil medal and the Ships on Stamps award for his eight frame thematic exhibit, *Thar She Blows—A History of Whales and Whaling*. George DeKornfeld received a Vermeil medal for *Making Whitetail Venison Sausage*, a one-frame thematic exhibit in recipe form. Though it is not to some people's taste, it does involve a mammal.

Unit member Susan Jones, one of the novice exhibitors, won a Silver award for her two-frame display exhibit, *The African Coelacanth*, a story of a living fossil once thought extinct. I learned a lot from this interesting exhibit.

Another Unit member and novice exhibitor, Barbara Herbert, received a Silver medal and the ATA Chapter V Incentive Award for her one-frame thematic exhibit *California Quail—Beyond Their Native Territory* about these birds living outside their native range.

Dawn Hamman included some more birds with her five-frame display exhibit *Backyard Chickens*, which received a Vermeil medal and an AAPE Award of Honor.

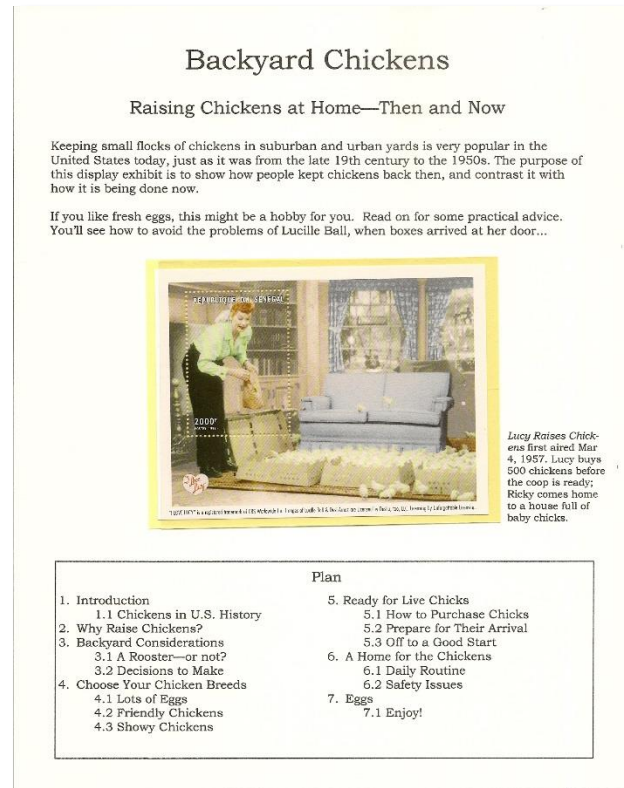
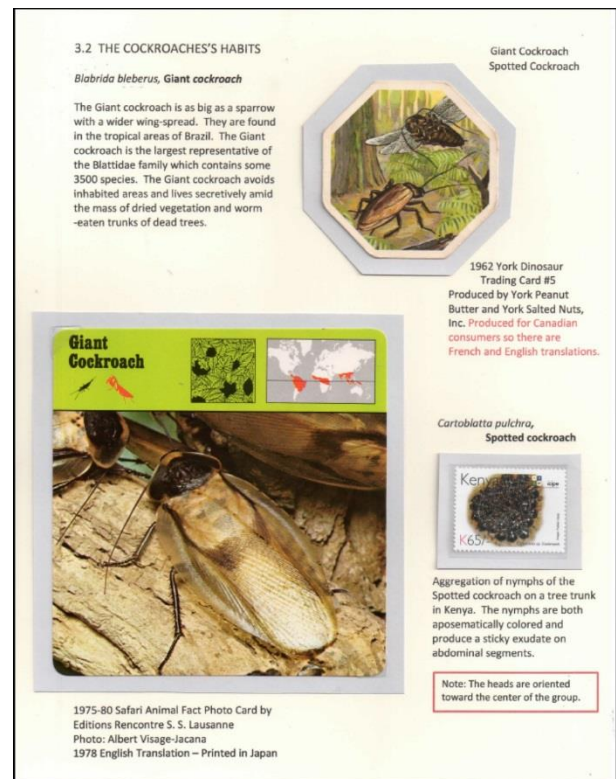
Page from *The African Coelacanth*

Page from *Coccinellidae—Ladybird Beetles*

One of my favorite exhibits was from former Unit member Jean Stout, another novice exhibitor at this show. Last year she decided to try making an exhibit by picking an off-the-wall topic depicted on only a small quantity of stamps. I think she succeeded admirably and the jury agreed. Her two-frame display exhibit titled, *A Celebration of the Cockroach!* not only won a Vermeil medal, but also received the AAPE Creativity Medal and the AAPE Novice Award. I am looking forward to seeing this exhibit again at SEAPEX.

As a collector of butterflies on stamps, I am always interested in exhibits that deal with insects and this show had another such presentation. Janice Erbach, another novice, received a Silver-Bronze medal and the Women Exhibitors Sterling Achievement Award for her one-frame thematic exhibit *Coccinellidae—Ladybird Beetles and their Impact on Man*.

I think many people were as impressed as I at the quantity and quality of the biological topic presentations at this show. The featured study unit this year was the Americana Study Unit. They had a one-frame exhibit that showcased their unit history. Next year in Portland, Oregon, our own **Biology Unit** will be the featured study unit. Unit members will be working on a Unit exhibit to display at that show. Let us all prepare an exhibit on a biology topic for the show next year and break the record set this year.

Title Page from *Backyard Chickens*Page from *A Celebration of the Cockroach!*