

NTSS 2013

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The American Topical Association held its annual National Topical Stamp Show in Rochester, New York 17–19 May. This year the ATA decided to join with the Rochester Philatelic Association to hold a combined show. Traditionally, the NTSS takes place in the month of June, but the Rochester Philatelic Exhibition (ROPEX) occurs in May, so the show was a month earlier than usual.

The two groups held the shows at the Main Street Armory in Rochester. This was a change from the original planned venue. The Sports Centre at Monroe Community College, which had been the usual site, was undergoing some renovation forcing the move. The Armory is an impressive, castle-like building, but in my opinion, it did not provide a very good place for a stamp show. The lighting was inadequate for the exhibits and made it difficult for viewers to see the material in at least two of the rows. The meeting rooms were also problematic. In addition, there seemed to be no hotels or eating establishments near the Armory and the show hotel was several miles away.



Main Street Armory

Both shows highlighted the railroad theme. ROPEX focused on the 100th Anniversary of New York City's Grand Central Terminal, the Empire State Express Engine 999, and the Trans-Continental Railroad. The ATA features a selected study unit for each NTSS and this year's featured unit was the Casey Jones Railroad Unit. As someone who finds railroads interesting and likes to ride trains from time-to-time, I enjoyed the featured theme.

One of the reasons for holding a combined show was to increase the number of dealers participating in the bourse and thus take advantage of the opportunity for both shows to interact with dealers that they might not otherwise encounter. This part of the plan seems to have paid off because there were almost 50 dealers offering every variety of philatelic items.

Another reason for combining the shows was to expose the public that normally attends ROPEX to the area of topical collecting with the hopes of attracting new members for ATA and its various study units. And on the flip side of this to enable topical collectors that attend NTSS to have access to dealers that they would not ordinarily see and provide exposure to traditional stamp exhibits that one does not always find at NTSS. The number of visitors was relatively sparse throughout the weekend and ATA only gained 12 new members.

Speaking of exhibits, both ROPEX and NTSS are World Series of Philately qualified shows and each had its own set of exhibits with separate juries and separate awards. The Grand Award winner from each show qualified for competition in the WSP Champion of Champions exhibit to be held at the American Philatelic Society Stamp Show this August in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The single frame Grand Award winners will compete for the Single Frame Champion of Champions Award at the APS AmeriStamp Expo 2014 to be held in Little Rock, Arkansas in February 2014.

Our own Unit Secretary-Treasurer, Chris Dahle, served as an apprentice juror for the NTSS exhibits.

The ROPEX Grand winner was Gregory Shoults with his exhibit, *Washington and Franklin Rotary Press Coils 1914–1922 Perforated 10 Issues Production and Uses*.

The NTSS Grand winner was Norman F. Jacobs for his exhibit, *Tennis: From Game of Kings to King of Games*.

The show included five exhibits in the Youth Division and they were all top quality as each received a Gold Award, which is a highly encouraging sign for the future of philately. Alex Fillion (age 13) won the Youth Grand Award with her exhibit, *What a Princess Wants*. This is a terrific exhibit and one of my personal favorites.

This year also offered a veritable plethora of biology-related exhibits and they won a boatload of special awards.

The Olive: Olea europaea, by Vincent De Luca, a five-frame thematic exhibit showing the origin and evolution of the olive tree, its many uses and symbolism, and its essential relation to man received a Gold Award and also won the Reserve Grand Award, one of the top three special awards. This exhibit also won our own Biology Unit Award for the best exhibit on a biological topic.

Plague: The Story of the Most Infamous Bacterial Disease, by Dr. Edwin J. Andrews, a six-frame thematic exhibit detailing the cause and transmission of plague, its major pandemics, treatment, prevention and socioeconomic impact on humanity received a Gold Award. It also won the APS Research Medal for research excellence.

The Donkey in Man's World, by Robert J. Mather, a ten-frame thematic exhibit that acquaints the viewer with the donkey and highlights its place in the world and its relationship with man received a Gold Award.

The Lion: Most Symbolic Animal of All, by Greg Balagian, a six-frame thematic exhibit that chronicles the origins and development of lion symbolism in human culture received a Vermeil Award and also won an AAPE Award of Honor for exemplifying high standards of philatelic exhibition presentation.

How to Grow Tomatoes, by Dawn R. Hamman, a one-frame display exhibit presenting step-by-step guide to selecting, growing, and harvesting your own delicious tomatoes received a Vermeil Award in its first ever showing, and won the Mary Ann Owens One-Frame Grand Award, another of the top three prizes. This clever exhibit also won the Most Popular Exhibit award as well as the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors Creativity Award given for inventiveness, humor, or unusual subject matter.

The Sirenians: Manatees and Dugongs, by Dawn R. Hamman, a one-frame display exhibit about these marine mammals and their struggle to survive received a Silver Award and also won the Women Exhibitors Sterling Achievement Award, which, by the way, does not have to go to a woman exhibitor as Chris Dahle won this award in the ROPEX competition for his exhibit on *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Food was the theme of several exhibits, including the Tomatoes exhibit already mentioned. And, as I have indicated previously in these pages, food certainly deserves a place in the field of biology.

Making of Whitetail Venison Sausage, by George DeKornfeld, a one frame thematic exhibit in recipe form received a Silver Award.

Dairy Products of the Cow, by Alex Fillion (age 13), a one-frame youth exhibit received a Gold Award.

The USDA "My Plate" Food Plate: Mapping Out the Foods, by Mia Fillion (age 12), a one-frame youth exhibit also received a Gold Award.

Stamp shows like NTSS offer visitors the chance to purchase supplies and search for new acquisitions for their collections from the many dealers that are present, as well as to see interesting and entertaining exhibits in a variety of categories. But the most appealing aspect of these shows to me is the opportunity to get together with friends I have made at previous shows and to meet and get to know other collectors, exhibitors, and dealers who share an interest in this most excellent hobby. I strongly urge all of you to take this opportunity at shows near you and to plan to attend the 65th Annual NTSS in St. Louis, Missouri, scheduled for 27–29 June 2014. I look forward to meeting you there.

See page 101 for a related article on the Distinguished Topical Philatelist award recipient.

