

NATIONAL TOPICAL STAMP SHOW 2018

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Our parent organization, the American Topical Association (ATA), held its annual National Topical Stamp Show (NTSS) in a joint venture with the American Philatelic Society (APS) StampShow on 9–12 August 2018, at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio. Both the NTSS and StampShow are American Philatelic Society sponsored World Series of Philately (WSP) national-level exhibitions.

If I attend 100 stamp shows in my life, it will be hard to top this one. This was the largest stamp show in the United States in 2018. The bourse contained 111 dealers and there were almost 1,000 frames of philatelic exhibits. In addition, there were four postal agencies including the United States Postal Service and the United Nations Postal Administration. More than 40 societies and other philatelic organizations were in attendance.

There was a lot of excitement and energy on the show floor during the whole weekend. On Friday morning after the first day, there was a meeting of the dealers and the show organizers. One dealer who attended reported to the ATA that without exception, the dealers were very pleased with the energy on the show floor and attendance and also were very impressed with the results of the joint effort by the APS and the ATA.

Attendance was strong on all four days and dealers I spoke with all reported excellent sales. At least one dealer even exceeded his sales at the New York 2016 show, which was double the number of days as this one.

The USPS went all out to support the show and built a castle right in the middle of the show floor. One side held the sales counter and on the other side clerks from the Kansas City Distribution Center expertly applied cancellations. One said after the first day, she felt her arm was going to fall off.

The USPS had a busy week also with new issues. On Tuesday, before the start of the show, they issued five designs in a pane of 20 stamps and a souvenir sheet of three for the Art of Magic in Las Vegas, Nevada.

On Thursday, at the APS-NTSS, they held a first day ceremony to issue a pane of 16 stamps with four different designs depicting stylized dragons. The APS and ATA used the dragon theme throughout the entire show. Hence the USPS castle. See the story on page 172 about a major error found at the show.

On Saturday, the USPS issued the second of their airmail stamps celebrating the 100th anniversary of the US Airmail Service in College Park, Maryland. Each of these new stamps, plus all of the current issues were on sale at the show.



USPS Castle (photo by Igor Grigorian)



Standing room only at the first day ceremony for the Dragon stamps (photo by Igor Grigorian)

The USPS ran out of each new issue at show and had to reorder/restock multiple times.

The USPS brought in sales clerks from Cincinnati to supplement the local Columbus district. All clerks were very professional and efficient. I spoke with one on Sunday who was from the Columbus district. She told me that all the clerks had really enjoyed the show. I kiddingly asked her if the USPS had covered their expenses and she just smiled. But she added that she had spent half of her extra pay on stamps. I asked her what she collected and she said she was not a collector, but she really liked the new designs. I think she, like many others, got caught up in the enjoyment that was happening all over the show.

The UN Postal Administration held a pre-launch ceremony where they unveiled the designs for the next issue in the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage stamp series. The six designs, two each for the UN offices in New York, Geneva, and Vienna, depict scenes throughout England. The UNPA offered the stamps for sale starting on 9 August in advance of their official 15 August official release date.

Both the APS and the ATA spent a lot of effort on publicizing the show and this work appeared to pay off handsomely. Early on Thursday morning, a crew from the ABC television station and its affiliates came to the show hall and conducted live interviews with many of the ATA and APS organizers. This feature, Good Day Columbus, has a big following and the host, Cameron Fontana, is a popular local personality. You can find these interviews recorded on line at www.gooddaycolumbus.com.

All during the show, there were costumed characters present to greet attendees and provide photo opportunities. They also handed out the Dragon passports.



Good Day Columbus interview with ATA members Dawn Hamman and Wayne Youngblood



A page (Trevor Hanna), "Perf" the Magic Dragon (Mara Hartzell), Her Majesty Queen Jennifer (Jennifer Miller), and Princess Chloe (Chloe Miller) ready to greet show guests



ATA Booth with Tony Curiale, Dawn Hamman, Jeff Hayward, and Larry Davidson with *What's First?*
(photo by Igor Grigorian)

The Ebony Society of Philatelic Events and Reflections (ESPER) was the ATA featured study unit. They had their own society booth at the show. Other study units that manned individual booths were the Christmas Philatelic Club, Penguins on Stamps Study Unit, Space Unit, and United Nations Philatelists. Several units including the Biology Unit displayed single frame exhibits (see page 177).

The ATA had a large booth at the entrance next to the APS booth. It was very busy throughout the show. Rasdale Stamp Company provided a large donation to help sponsor the booth. The Biology Unit also provided a donation to help sponsor the booth along with seven other ATA study units.

The ATA signed up an unprecedented 65 new and reinstated members. Preliminary reports indicate that the ATA took in more than \$8,500 in sales at the show. These statistics are exceptionally encouraging.

The ATA offered several special items for sale to everyone. The *Taste of Topicals* packets that contain topical stamps and covers along with a few topical album pages to mount them on were very popular with show goers. Well over 100 sets were sold. The ATA offered checklists, normally available only to members, to everyone on the subjects of Ohio and Dragons, but these did not sell as well as hoped.

The ATA's newest publication, *What's First?*, was offered for the first time. This 335-page handbook seeks to answer the question, "What was the first stamp to feature each topic?" It covers more than 800 topics and contains high-quality images of more than 700 stamps. Did you know that the first stamp to feature the Statue of Liberty was issued by neither the US nor France? It was Uruguay (Sc#217) issued in 1919.

The author, Jack Gray, who passed away in 2017, spent 30 years researching and writing the descriptions. This entertaining handbook will be a helpful reference not only for topical collectors, but also for any exhibitors by providing them with useful philatelic research. The book is available from the ATA at a price of \$40 plus shipping for either the print or DVD version.

At the Celebration Banquet, Wayne L. Youngblood, editor of the ATA's magazine *Topical Time*, received the Luff Award for Outstanding Service to the American Philatelic Society. The Luff Award is the most prestigious award given by the APS. Also receiving the award were Denise L. Stotts and John H. Barwis.

The ATA held its annual board meeting and annual general meeting at the show. Four new members were inducted to the board: Tom Broadhead, Carol Costa, John Leszak, and Don Neal.



Executive Director Vera Felts swears in new ATA Board members Carol Costa, Tom Broadhead, and Don Neal
(photo by Igor Grigorian)

Series Champion of Champions competition among all the Grand Award winners from the 30+ national WSP shows that take place around the US and Canada. This year there were 25 exhibits in the competition. The CoC prize this year went to James Allen representing the St. Louis Expo show for *The First United States 12¢ Stamp Series of 1851–1861*.

In addition to the CoC exhibits, there were separate sections for the NTSS and the APS Open exhibitions. Each section received its own medal awards and its own Grand, Reserve Grand, and Most Popular awards. But the special awards from the various societies and other sponsors were shared across both sections.

The Biology Unit provided First, Second, and Third Awards for exhibits that achieved a Vermeil or higher level award and that best incorporated some aspect of biological science, or a biological subject. The Biology Third Award went to Chris Dahle for *An Introduction to the Evolution of Plants*, which also received a Vermeil medal. His prize appropriately was an art glass pumpkin.



Wayne Youngblood accepting the Luff Award
(photo by Igor Grigorian)

Among the speakers at the show was our own Laurie Ryan who gave a presentation Friday morning on *JRR Tolkien, the Hobbit, and Dragons*.

This show was a combined philatelic exhibition. The APS StampShow is always the venue for the annual World

The Biology Second Award went to Roger Van Laere for *Atlantic Puffin: Icon of the Isle of Lundy*, which also was awarded a Gold medal. His prize was an art glass whale.

The Biology First Award went to Dawn R. Hamman for *Backyard Chickens – Raising Chickens at Home, Then and Now*. This exhibit received a Large Gold medal and also won the NTSS Most Popular Award. Her Biology prize was an art glass paperweight with an embedded image of a glass jellyfish.

In the APS Open section, Mark Thompson won the Most Popular Award and a Large Vermeil medal for *Women of the Black Heritage Series – From the Fields of Slavery to the Halls of Congress*.



Dawn Hamman with her Biology First Award
(photo by John Hamman)



Chris Dahle with his
Biology Third Award

The APS Open offered two Reserve Grand Awards. Ian Gibson-Smith received one for *The Hong Kong*

“China” Overprints. Daniel Knowles received the other for *The Confederate States of America (CSA) Postal Initiative*, which also won the Postal History Society award.

Charles C. Wooster won the APS Open Grand Award for *The Postage Due Issues of Peru 1874–1948*, which also received the APS Research Award.

On the NTSS side, Carl Jennings won the Reserve Grand Award for *Ancient Egypt: The Time of the Pharaohs*, which also received the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors Award for Excellence – Epilogue.

Jack Congrove received the NTSS Grand Award for *Alexander Hamilton: Soldier, Financier, Statesman, Founder*. Both the APS Open and the NTSS Grand Award winners are eligible to compete in the Champion of Champions event next year in Omaha, Nebraska.

You can find a high quality video report on the show here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5blmEro1G30>. It was made by Graham Beck, who produces interesting and entertaining YouTube videos titled *Exploring Stamps*.

The success of this show and the cordial relationship that has developed between the APS and the ATA has influenced both organizations to try the joint show concept again next year in Omaha, Nebraska. The show is scheduled for 1–4 August.

Next year the ATA will be celebrating its 70th anniversary and there are big plans in the works already to make this a must attend event. Next year is also the 150th anniversary of the First Transcontinental Railroad and the show theme is going to be Trains.

I have no doubt that there will be plenty of imaginative implementations of the railroad theme. Perhaps the model railroad hobby will be involved along with Railway Post Office mail and many other related activities. Stay tuned for more information and make your plans now to be there.



Jack Congrove accepting the NTSS Grand Award
from APS Vice President Trish Kaufmann
(photo by Igor Grigorian)