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Newsletter of the Lake County (IL)

Philatelic Society - Established 1933

Website: [LCPSHOME.ORG](http://LCPSHOME.ORG)

# Perforations



Last month we had a informal discussion of **"Passing on Your Stamp Collection"** led by Jerry Dachs.

In general, it appears that the best recourse is to hand it over to an auction house or donate it to a charity if there is no one who wants to build on your collection. The proviso is that you at least need to leave some notes as to what stamps has some value. Also, inform your heirs that the values found in the catalogue are not what the stamps are "really" worth (except in the case of a charity donation).

This month, Dave Sadler will present **"Part II of Stamp ID - the not so fun details of trying to pin a stamp to some point on the globe"**.

The meeting for June 25th will find us at the Grayslake Library where we will have a talk on **"Unusual Markings on Offset Printed US Postage Stamps"** by guest speaker Jerry Nylander.

We also learned that Fred Schaefer passed away on Easter Sunday. He was 99 years old.

Fred held several offices, including President from 1992-1994 in the club over the 30-plus years he was a member. In his last 15 years, as a club member, he gave three presentations on topical stamps.



His favorite group being sea planes. He often quipped that in during WWII, in the Navy, while stationed on an aircraft tender, that he never saw an actual seaplane



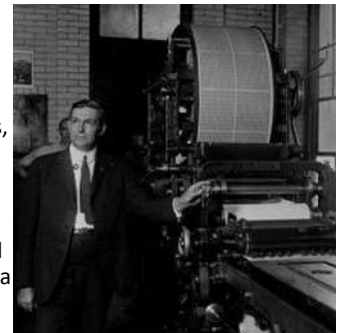
While doing some research on the BEP assuming of the Harding Memorial Stamp of 1923 I came across an article in the Adirondack Almanack (2014 November 03) **Benjamin R. Stickney: Man of a Trillion Stamps** by Lawrence P. Gooley.

Many average citizens lead private lives that impact relatively few people in the overall scheme of things. Some who engage the public via music, books, politics, or show business can affect vast audiences in at least a small way. Others, like inventors, manage to combine the two—somehow touching the lives of many while remaining relatively anonymous. An Adirondack man did just that, reaching hundreds of millions of people and saving the US government vast sums of money. Museums, including the Smithsonian, have featured exhibits on his work. Yet today he remains a virtual unknown.

Benjamin Rollin Stickney was born in May 1871 in the village of Port Henry (town of Moriah). After schooling locally, he lived and worked in Ticonderoga, operating a bicycle repair shop, and at one time working in the machine shop of the Ticonderoga Pulp & Paper Company. It was also at Ticonderoga where he met and began a romance with Hattie Delano, a cousin of FDR.

In September 1897, Rollin (as his friends knew him) accepted a mechanic position with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington, DC. Six months later, he and Hattie married in Ticonderoga and settled down in Washington.

Stickney was recognized as a very capable employee, and by 1908, more than a dozen of his inventions had improved the department's services. That year, Joseph E. Ralph assumed the bureau directorship. He tasked Stickney with solving a problem that had stymied everyone since the bureau began printing postage stamps in 1894: how to develop an efficient method of dry printing.



## Treasures' Report: Total – \$3,343.55

Local  
Stamp  
Shows

**COMPEX STAMP SHOW**  
Guerin College Preparatory High School  
8001 W. Belmont Ave.,  
River Grove IL  
May 31, June 1-2

**MSDA Summer Show**  
Crown Plaza Milwaukee Airport  
6401 South 13th Street  
Milwaukee WI  
July 6-7

**MSDA Chicago North Show**  
Ramada Inn  
1090 S Milwaukee Ave.  
Wheeling IL  
July 27-28

**Next meeting:**  
**7-PM on Tuesday 21 May 2019**  
**at the Warren-Newport Library**  
**224 O'Plaine Rd Gurnee IL 60031**



**Officers:**

**Dr Tom Willer – President**  
**Bill Schultz – Vice President**  
**Dave Sadler – Secretary**  
**Ed Pieklo – Treasurer**

As noted in Scientific American magazine, "Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent by private concerns in trying to overcome this seemingly unsurmountable obstacle. Some of the most skilled mechanical minds and the greatest geniuses in the world have tried to overcome this difficulty and failed."

Within two years, Rollin believed he had the solution, but the bureau's budget was lacking. Director Ralph sought financial assistance from the Post Office Department, and a prototype was built. Other department directors that used the bureau's services observed the new machine in action, and all were stunned. It worked perfectly and was far faster and much more efficient than the previous equipment.

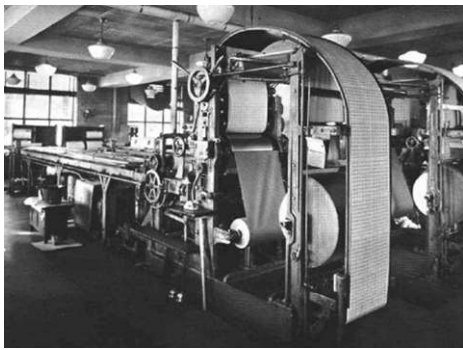
The former rate of production was 4800 stamps per minute, or 40 million daily. Six days were required for the process, from receiving paper to producing finished stamps. The paper-wetting alone consumed at least 48 hours.

With his invention, Stickney eliminated 23 steps from the overall process, which now took only 9 hours from start to finish. Millions more stamps could be produced daily, and at a calculated cost savings of 57 percent. Untold millions of dollars were seen in future benefits.

The single machine was put into use, and more were ordered. Benjamin Stickney, already known as the most-promoted government employee, earned a raise and served just below the director as Mechanical Expert and Designer.

One has to ask: was his invention really that good? By all accounts, including industry leaders, it was revolutionary. The bureau produced many types of stamps that could be made on Stickney's machines. In the mid-1920s, revenue stamps alone were printed at the rate of 22 million daily. But in the stamp category, nothing came close to the quantity produced for post offices across the country—approximately 14 billion postage stamps per year. The Stickney Rotary Web-fed Intaglio Press, known popularly as the Stickney Press, handled it with ease.

As more machines were built and put into production, savings and efficiency increased. Occasionally, much was made of the fact that Stickney had given all of his many patents to the government, but in reality, that's the nature of the business. Work performed for hire belongs to the company.



Still, media stories emphasized that the man saving millions of dollars for his employer was earning just \$3500 per year in 1912 (equal to \$87,000 in 2014).

The Stickney Press was coveted by many other countries, providing another source of revenue for the United States. In 1919, accompanied by his 16-year-old son Malcolm, Rollin made one of several journeys overseas for the installation of Stickney machines, the first of which was in Sweden. They also visited Denmark, England, and France. Other trips for installations were made to Belgium, Canada, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and Mexico.

Rollin's salary had risen to \$5000 by the early 1920s, and that's when one of those mind-boggling events occurred: government action that leaves everyone shaking their heads in wonder. President Warren Harding, without even a day's warning, fired the bureau's director, assistant director, and 27 other top management officials on March 31, 1922, and abolished seven other positions. Many arrived at work that day only to be turned away. The most ungrateful act and a huge injustice was that Stickney was among those fired. Harding would only say they were all let go "for the good of the service."

The inside story involved previous cutbacks and cost-cutting measures that had led to job losses. Disgruntled layoff victims claimed there had been dual printings of certain securities, all to the financial benefit of upper-level employees. Dark rumors circulated until Harding, tired of it all, issued an executive order dismissing many of the bureau's managers.

About a year later, the President concluded he had been misled by false accusations. Another executive order on February 14, 1923, restored all the former employees who had been wronged, though some had died or moved on to other employment. Benjamin Stickney was among those who returned.

The President's actions had injured the livelihood of many employees, including Stickney, who had suffered through the jobless period while enduring ill health. Six months after Rollin returned to work, Harding suddenly died in office. There's no small irony in what followed.

As a tribute to the fallen President, the Postmaster General ordered a special stamp issue—the Black Harding. In the record time of less than a month, the stamp was designed, created, and printed. Upon release, it sold in unprecedented numbers, the demand far exceeding the supply.

The solution? Stickney's presses were devoted solely to producing the memorial stamp, keeping up with the incredible demand. The invention of the man Harding had recently fired ensured that the late President was properly honored.



As the industry standard, Stickney Presses were critical to the bureau's success. By 1931, 29 of them, plus several machines devised by Rollin for printing securities and other items, occupied five floors and more than 60,000 square feet of the Engraving and Printing Building.

Stickney decided to retire around 1930. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon sent a personal letter of appreciation, expressing regret at losing such a valued employee and persuading him to come back occasionally when needed.



Throughout his life, Rollin returned frequently to Ticonderoga and Moriah to visit friends and family. Summer vacations were spent there as well. In retirement, he and Hattie also spent time at Sabbath Day Point on Lake George.

Stickney passed away in January 1946, but his wonderful machines lived on. The last one was retired by the bureau in 1962, replaced by the latest technology, "electronically actuated web-fed presses."

Remarkably, the Stickney Presses served for more than 50 years, producing massive quantities of many stamp types. Topping the list is postage stamps, possibly a trillion in the US alone.

In America and other countries using Stickney machines, the vast majority of people who mailed letters between 1912 and 1962 were touched in at least a small way by the inventor—Benjamin Rollin Stickney, perhaps the most accomplished anonymous Adirondack native.