

PETER JAFFE, RDP, FRPSL, 1914-2005

The Society (Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria) lost one of its most outstanding members with the passing of Peter Jaffé in September at the aged of 92.

He was born in London and educated at Rugby School and King's College, Cambridge. A career in stockbroking was interrupted by intelligence work during World War II.

Peter Jaffé's evolution as a stamp collector seems to have taken the opposite course to most of us. Stamps collecting began in 1921, and his first serious collection seems to have begun in 1929 (at the age of 15) and this was the Village Postmarks of Gold Coast. The collection of the stamps themselves was to come much later. The postmarks of a number of the other smaller British Colonies was added to his interests; this included St. Vincent, where the abbreviated datestamps of the Inland Post were among the better known and most sort after markings.

Nearly all his early philatelic writings were on the subject of these postmarks and their associated postal history. Quite a number of articles appeared through the 1950s in Gibbons Stamp Monthly, Stamp Collector's Fortnightly, Strand Stamp Journal and Stamp Collecting. The series of articles in the latter on the St. Vincent Inland Post is noteworthy for the use of local St. Vincent records researched during a visit to the island. It is only in very recent times that any philatelists have ventured back to see what the local archives contain.

Just this year in Gibbons Stamp Monthly the discovery of a previously unrecorded Seychelles datestamp was reported. The discoverer reported that he had been inspired to collect Seychelles postmarks after reading an article on the subject by Peter Jaffé in GSM in 1951.

In 1951 Peter arrived in Australia. He joined The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria in 1954.

It was while looking at St. Vincent abbreviated datestamps that Peter finally took more notice the stamps themselves. But St. Vincent was only the beginning. Many other collections followed, to the point that he must be considered the last great general collector in this country. The special areas of interest have been the British West Indies and Perkins Bacon issues in general. The Grenada, St. Lucia and Turks Island are outstanding. The St. Vincent is simply incredible.

St. Vincent was first exhibited at MIPEX in 1963, and several times subsequently within Australia. While material was constantly acquired it was in the early 1980s that the collection underwent a significant transformation with the acquisition of several important groups intact. The collection also contains what may be the only Perkins Bacon artist's drawing for a classic stamp outside the Royal Collection - for the Queen's head used on St. Vincent stamps.

In this extended form, the collection was exhibited at AUSIPEX 84 and was awarded a Large Gold Medal. Subsequent Large Golds were won at Philakorea (1984), Hafnia (1987), Capex (1987) and Helsinki (1988), which qualified the collection for the FIP Class d'Honneur. Peter was the first Australian exhibitor to achieve this. It was a very significant achievement for an exhibit of a small British Colony which did not issue imperforate stamps. At Hafnia the collection was awarded the FIP Medal for Research, a rare achievement, and the only Australian exhibit to have been so honoured. The collection was subsequently shown in the Class d'Honneur at Philexfrance (1989), London (1990), New Zealand 1990, Espana 1992, Pacific 97 (San Francisco) and Israel (1998). It is the most decorated Australian exhibit of the modern FIP era.

The Traditional collection being out of competition, Peter turned the clock back and returned to the postmarks and postal history. Largely independent of the Large Gold exhibit, the postal history exhibit won a Gold Medal at London in 2000. Its coverage is no less impressive than the Traditional exhibit; it contains probably 90% of the recorded abbreviated datestamp covers.

There can be no question that the Jaffé St. Vincent constitutes one of the greatest collections ever formed in this country. In 1980 it was the subject a full display at The Royal Philatelic Society, London. But the modern emphasis on exhibiting is in some ways unfortunate, for while the status of the St. Vincent exhibit is unquestioned, its real strength is in its supporting material that has never been exhibited. The vast quantity of material served a useful purpose. Probably the greatest unsolved mystery of St. Vincent philately was the settings of the 1880-81 provisional surcharges. The Jaffé holding of these stamps is incredible; of the 4d on 1/- 630 stamps were printed, and the

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collection has in excess of 10% of this total, which enabled some real progress to be made. An article on the subject in *The London Philatelist* was awarded the Tapling Medal in 1988 for the best article published in the journal. Further articles followed on the 1880 1d on half 6d and 1881 ½d on half 6d and 1d on 6d. A fair slice of the truth now seems to have been reached. And for good measure, a further article followed on the Barbados 1d on half 5/-, perhaps an even tougher problem in some ways because by cutting of the value tablet the printer precluded the survival of any vertical multiples.

One final Jaffé collection deserves mention. This is the Perkins Bacon CANCELLED stamps of 1861. Not a large collection; at a pinch, you could probably squeeze it onto three album pages. It is a collection that has required great patience, since the stamps turn up infrequently. At the time of writing the book, the Jaffé collection had 77 examples; the Royal Collection contains only 68, although Peter modestly points out that he has more duplication and the Queen has more different stamps. At the first Claridge's exhibition in London, an exhibit of Perkins Bacon combining the best of Peter's material from a wide range of countries with the CANCELLED stamps made for an outstanding and powerful display.

In this Society, Peter has President twice, in 1972 and 1979. The Presidential display the first time was St. Vincent - no surprises - but in 1979 it was New Hebrides. He has been awarded all the Society's honours - the Purves Medal in 1976, Honorary Life Membership on 1989, and the David Hill Medal in 1990.

Peter probably holds the record for entries into the Society's Annual Competition, and certainly for awards. There have been Silver Medals for Grenada, Ceylon, "2½" (whatever that was), St. Vincent (twice) and Mauritius, and Bronze Medals for St. Vincent, Gold Coast, British Guiana, and South Australia. He quite possibly also holds the record for displays to monthly meetings.

Over many years of collecting such a wide range of subjects you must learn something. Peter, it seems learned a lot. His best-known work in the Society has been on the Expert Committee. He was a member for many years before being appointed Chairman in 1980, a position he held until 2000. His ability to draw on such a wide range of knowledge and experience amazed those of us who served on the Committee with him. He insisted on the highest standards being maintained, standards which I think he feels are not being maintained by some modern experts. Disagreements within the Committee obviously occur, but only occasionally did the combined opposition of the other members sway his opinion, sometimes perhaps against his better judgment. His expertise was recognized not only locally. Peter had a close relationship with the Chairmen of the RPSL Expert Committee, and was widely regarded as one of the world's leading stamp experts, particularly on classic British Empire.

Outside the Society, he joined the Royal Philatelic Society London in 1955 and became a Fellow in 1962. A long-time member of the British West Indies Study Circle, he served a number of years as Chairman of that group - an exceptional honour for an overseas member.

In 1992 he was elected to sign the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists and signed the Roll at Congress at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was the 14th Australian to sign.

In 2002 Peter was awarded an OAM (Medal in the General Division of the Order of Australia) in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for Services to Philately. He became the fourth Australian to be so honoured in the philatelic field.

Peter will be remembered as one of the giants of Australian philately. The condolences of the Society are extended to his wife Patricia and family.

Geoff Kellow