

The Heritage of the Collectors Club: Our 125th Anniversary Celebration

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Chair, Archival and Historical Committee

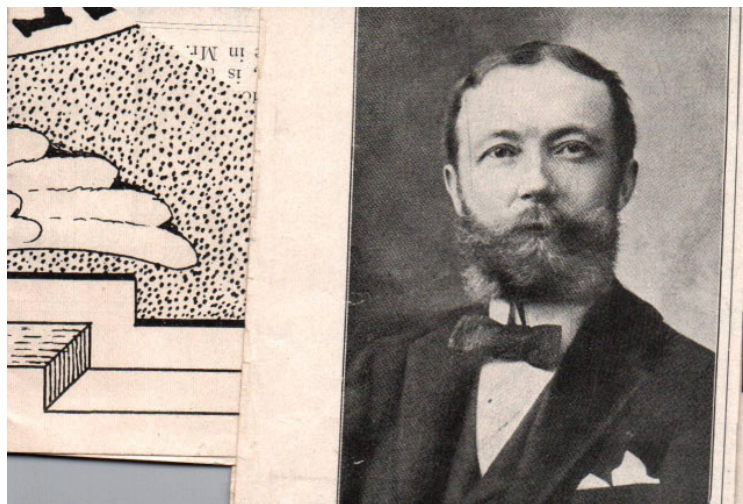


Figure 1. Charles Lathrop Pack, 1857-1937. A slim man of 5 feet, 4 inches, a dapper dresser who sported a reddish-brown beard.

Our 125th-year celebration includes a One-Frame Exhibit

On Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2021, our annual single-frame exhibits will feature two different *non-competitive* frames by former Lakewood, N.J., member, Charles Lathrop Pack (1857-1937), who is shown in Figure 1.

This material was gifted to the Club by Mr. Pack and has rarely been shown. Mark Banchik showed selected pages of Mr. Pack's massive seven-volume *Substituted Heads of Brazil* collection in 2006 at Balpex in Hunt Valley, Md., at a regional meeting of the Collectors Club. In November 2017, I showed his Canadian Small Queens collection, donated in 1930,¹ at our one-frame competition, as a single-frame exhibit, by leaving out only two or three pages (Figure 2). This is charming material indeed.

Who was Charles Lathrop Pack?

Mr. Pack's grandfather and father were, respectively, wealthy and very wealthy timbermen. Pack turbocharged his inherited business with a European education in forestry, such that some pre-World War I newspaper accounts said he was the fifth richest man in America. As an ardent philatelist, Pack had notable collections of Victoria², New South Wales, Cape of Good Hope, Brazil, Uruguay and Canada. In 1912, King George V bought his New Brunswick and Nova Scotia collections. Pack won every possible philatelic honor of his time and was in the first group that signed the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 1921. In 1941, when the APS had its first induction of Hall of Fame members, Pack was included in the record 15.



Figure 2a. Small Queens of Canada.



Figure 2b. Small Queens of Canada.



Figure 3. Stamps of Brazil, Issue of 1894-97.



Figure 4. A 1902 letter from Rio de Janeiro to Pack's eldest son, then age 14. Author's collection.

In 1900, Pack left his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, to winter in Lakewood, N.J., a winter resort for the wealthy elite of the Gilded Age, such as John D. Rockefeller and Grover Cleveland. His children's physician feared that the harsh winter climate was impacting his four children's health. The eldest child, George, was a hemophiliac who was often wheelchair- or bed-bound. George became an ardent philatelist and once owned a block of Pan-Am inverts. He had an extensive worldwide correspondence with other collectors (see Figure 4), but

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passed away at age 16. His father was also a keen letter writer and kept in touch worldwide (Figures 5 and 6). When the new Lathrop Hall estate was completed in 1909, Lakewood became the family's year-round home, but Pack usually spent the work week in Cleveland or Manhattan.



Figure 5. (left) A 1909 letter from Pack: 8¢ registry plus double weight U.K.-U.S. treaty rate of 1908 of 2¢ per oz. for transatlantic mail by direct American or British steamer.



Figure 5b (right) Reverse of cover. One must love a time when your home phone number is 138. Check inside? Author's collection.

Figure 6a. (right) A 1912 cover from Pack to Aussie stamp dealer. Pack had switched stationery as well as seals. This letter left domestic mails in Seattle the year after the USPOD gave up on registry exchange labels.



Figure 6b (left) Reverse side of cover. Author's collection. Check inside?

As Lakewood was about 70 miles from Columbus Circle when Pack joined the Club in 1911, he would have been a non-resident member, since the limit is 50 miles. He became our second honorary member, duly elected in 1913. (The Earl of Crawford being our first in 1911.)

At the turn of the century, all significant exhibitions were in London and other European capitals. Pack dominated these shows with the depth and variety of his material. He was the featured collector in the *New York Times* lavish write-up of the first international American show, the 1913 New York International Exhibition.³ He was already known as the "Medal King." Later, Pack was the president of the exhibition committee for the International Philatelic Show of 1926 in New York City when Alfred F. Lichtenstein was the chair of the directing

committee.

It's hard to imagine today, but some souls complained that he won solely based on his deep pockets. As a pushback, Pack formed a collection titled *Substituted Heads of Brazil* (The Liberty Heads of 1894-97, Scott Nos. 116-121, Figure 3). These stamps then – and now – are the cheapest of stamps. He found, among other things, numerous examples where the central vignette of the Liberty Head of the 100 reis value and 700 reis were switched. He examined well over 100,000 examples of these stamps and filled eight red leather albums with plating varieties.⁴ How Pack could examine so many stamps on his busy schedule given his vast dealings in banking, real estate and timber is testament to his energies.

He exhibited his Brazilian masterpiece nationally and internationally, usually as a non-competitive exhibit. After showing it at a regular evening meeting in 1927, he donated it to the Club.⁵

In 1929, the collection was given into the custody of Elliot Perry of Westfield, N.J., an important dealer and frequent member of the Club's Board of Governors.⁶ Exhibition chairs were invited to show the exhibit by arrangement with Perry and the Club. This collection is truly a wonder to examine and defines Pack as one of the early giants of positional plating studies.

In later life, Pack spent much of his time as a prominent conservationist and donated the vast majority of his wealth to that cause, funding many universities and State forests. He directed the home garden effort in the United States during WWI when the nation feared food shortages due to an anticipated workforce shortage on farms.

He was an acquaintance of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and those conversations would be a treasure today. After his passing, his stamp estate was sold by Harmer, Rooke & Co, of New York City, between December 1944 and 1947.

Our 125th-year celebration includes our Annual Dinner

For Thursday, Nov. 11, President Larry Haber and his team promise a great New York City dinner at The Harvard Club. We will salute the three recent winners of the Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award for Distinguished Service to Philately: John Barwis (2020), Patrick Maselis (2021) and Mark Banchik (2021).

In the same year, 1912, that Pack wrote about his Brazil plating project for the popular press, he attended the Collectors Club annual dinner. Here is a contemporaneous review:

Collectors' Club Dinner⁷

A majority of the members of the Collectors' Club, with their guests, assembled at the club rooms, Kalil Building, on March 27, for their annual dinner. The event was one of the most successful in the history of the Club. Mine host Kalil prepared a splendid menu, accompanied with music and solo singing by a young professional lady vocalist, the dinner was thoroughly enjoyed. The speakers of the evening were Judge Russell, of Brooklyn, a non-collector guest of President Chittenden, who made some humorous remarks, who was preceded by John W. Scott, the treasurer of the International Stamp Exhibition, who told of the great progress being made in the subscriptions and donation of funds. Mr.

Charles Lathrop Pack, who was the guest of Mr. Bartels, told of his discovery of the borrowed heads of the Brazil 100 reis 1894-97, that are now pretty well known to readers of stamp journals. He passed around printed slips of paper showing enlargements of the normal type, 700 reis, 200 reis, and 500 reis heads of Liberty. Mr. Pack brought with him his great collection of Cape of Good Hope wood blocks, which made John W. Scott, John N. Luff and other veteran stamp experts gaze in wonder and admiration. In shades, pairs and blocks this specialized collection of wood blocks is probably unequaled.

At our 25th anniversary dinner, Mr. Charles Lathrop Pack was introduced as “the foremost American Philatelist.” He was later noted to be one of the principal donors to the Club.

Now that you know exactly what to expect, we hope to see you at the quasiquicentennial annual dinner.

End Notes

1. “Another Charles Lathrop Pack Gift to the Collectors Club,” *CCP*, January 1931, page 99.
2. Pack, C.L., *Victoria: The Half-length Portraits and the Twopence Queen Enthroned*, Collectors Club, New York, 1923.
3. *N.Y. Times*, Oct. 12, 1913, page 95.
4. Pack, C.L., “The Brazil 100 Reis of 1894-97,” *The Philatelic Gazette*, Vol II, No. 13, March 1912, pp. 210-217.
5. Phillips, Charles J., “A Notable Gift from Charles Lathrop Pack,” *CCP*, July 1927, page 124.
6. Perry, Elliott, full-page ad, *CCP*, January 1930, page 39.
7. Randall, W.W., “Collectors’ Club Dinner,” *The Philatelic Gazette*, Vol II, No. 13, March 1912, page 260.

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Philips, Charles J., “The Collectors Club, Its Background and Future,” *CCP*, July 1938, 167-183.

Ibid, October 1938, 313-326.

Ibid, January 1939, 53-72.

Ibid, April 1939, 144-152.

Ibid, July 1939, 199-215.

William, W. Wylie, “An Informal History of The Collectors Club,” from *ANPHILEX '71 Catalogue*, 25 pages. Available at www.collectorsclub.org. under “About Us,” tab, then “History.”

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