

The Maine Philatelist

Vol. 29, No. 3

January 1997

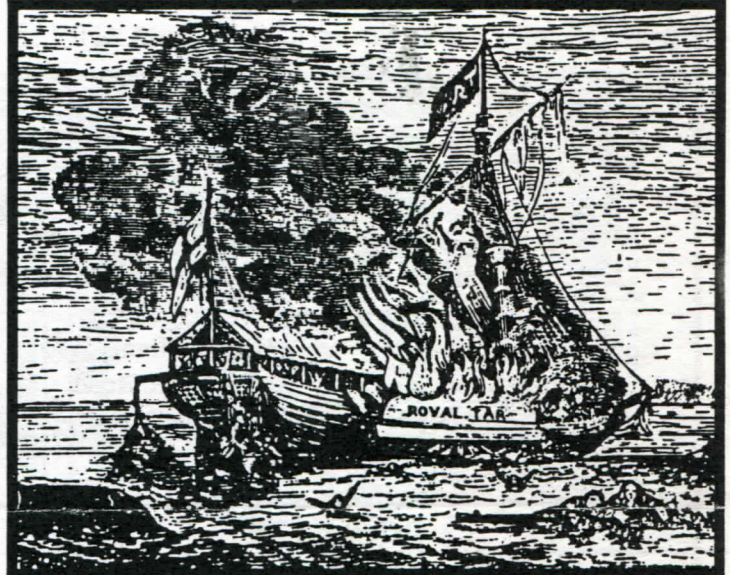
Whole No. 106

Shipwreck near Eastport brought very unusual menagerie to the shore

By Bob Parsons

In 1823, the newly formed Kennebec Steam Navigation Company bought the steamer *Patent* to run on the coast of Maine. The following year, this same company began running the S.S. *Maine*. She ran out of Bath for Eastport, making occasional calls at Saint John, New Brunswick, and connected at Bath with the *Patent* which ran to Boston. In 1825, regular sailings between Saint John and Eastport began, with the S.S. *Eagle*. Thus by the mid-1820s there was a weekly steamboat service between Saint John and Boston and intermediate ports. During the 1830s James Whitney ran several steamers between Saint John, St. Stephen, St. Andrews and Eastport, Maine. Mails were carried privately on these steamers.

The *Royal Tar* was launched in the spring of 1836. She was a wooden side-wheeler, built at Saint John to run from that port to Portland, Maine, connecting with the steamers for Boston. She was 164 feet in length with a beam of 24 feet,



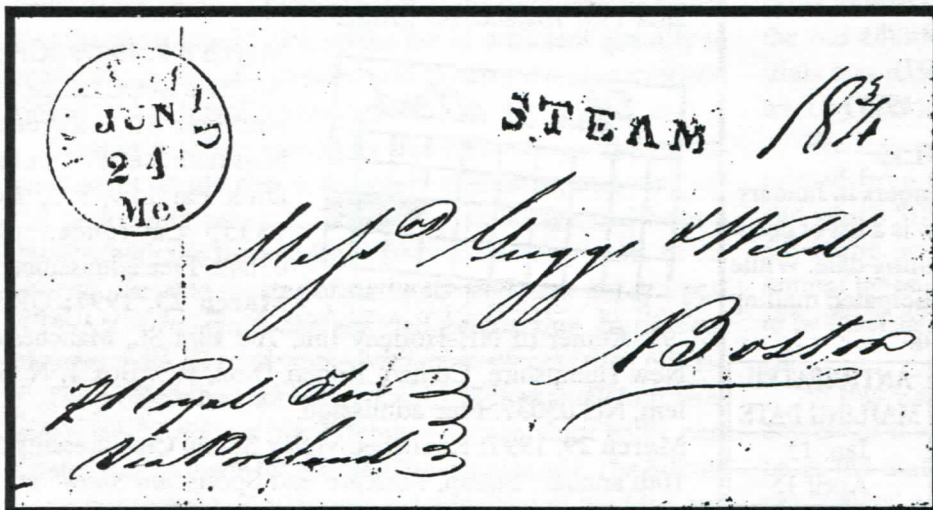
The Royal Tar from an old woodcut showing people and animals escaping the burning ship. Reprinted from the Postal History Society of Canada Journal.

and weighed 400 tons. On her first trip in May 1836 she carried 200 passengers.

Throughout the summer of that year a circus and menagerie toured the province of New Brunswick. After a successful season the entire circus embarked on the *Royal Tar* on October 21, 1836. Captain Thomas Reed was in command as she sailed out, with a strange cargo of assorted animals, including horses, two camels, an elephant, two lions, one Royal Bengal tiger, a gnu and two pelicans.

High winds forced the *Royal Tar* to seek shelter, first at Eastport harbor and then at Fox Island. It was during this layover that the ship's boilers ran dry, becoming red hot and setting fire to two wedges supporting the elephant stall. The fire was quickly out of control. Led by Captain Reed, a desperate rescue operation ensued with the stern boat, a makeshift raft and a nearby revenue cutter. Of the 93 people on board, 32 passengers and crew members per-

Continued on page 2



Early Portland letter from the Saint John-Portland steamship line. This one traveled on the Royal Tar. Courtesy Bob Parsons.

The Maine Philatelist is published quarterly by the Maine Philatelic Society, Inc.

The purpose of the Society, a non-profit Maine corporation, is to promote philately in the Pine Tree State. Membership is open to anyone. Membership applications are available from the Secretary, listed below. Dues are \$5 per year.

A Life Membership is also available. Contact the Secretary for details.

Articles for publication should be sent to the President/Editor at address below.

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PUBLISHING SCHEDULE

The Maine Philatelist is distributed to members in January, April, July and October of each year. Below is a list of deadlines for each issue and the anticipated mailing date. While deadline for copy (articles) is firm, the anticipated mailing date is just that -- a "best guess" of mailing.

ISSUE COVER DATE	DEADLINE FOR COPY	JOURNAL TO PRINTER	ANTICIPATED MAILING DATE
January	Dec. 15	Dec. 30	Jan. 15
April	March 15	March 30	April 15
July	June 15	June 30	July 15
October	Sept. 15	Sept. 30	Oct. 15

ished. On November 3, 1836, Captain Reed was presented with a purse of \$700 for his heroic work during the fire. A few years later he was appointed harbor master at Saint John.

The letter illustrated was written at Saint John on June 21, 1836 and is endorsed in manuscript "p. Royal Tar Via Portland." A captain's gratuity would have been paid for its carriage to Portland, where it was dated JUN(E) 24, struck with the STEAM handstamp, and rated 18 3/4 cents due, which was the U.S. inland postage to Boston. Both of the Portland handstamps are in red.

This is one of the earliest identifiable steamer letters on the Saint John-Portland route. The service was a forerunner of those offered by the private express operators such as Gunnison and Favor, and to the later official (Canadian) government service which commenced in 1853.

REFERENCES

Jephcott, Greene & Young. *The Postal History of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick*. Sissons Publications Ltd., Toronto, 1964.
 Fred Erving Dayton, *Steamboat Days*. Tudor Publishing Company, New York, 1939.
 Snow, Edward R. *Marine Mysteries and Dramatic Disasters of New England*. Dodd, Mead, New York, 1936.

ENDNOTE

This article was reprinted with kind permission from the Postal History Society of Canada *Journal* number 87 of September 30, 1996. Thanks to author Bob Parson and Editor Robert C. Smith of Ottawa, Ontario.

New England stamp shows of interest...

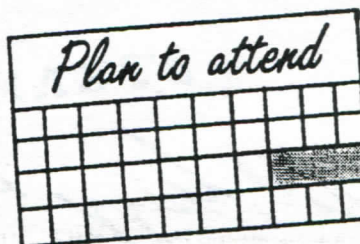
February 23, 1997: Charles Brothers Memorial Coin & Stamp Show, Congregation Kodimoh, 124 Sumner Ave., Springfield, Massachusetts. Contact Joel B. Creeger, 153 Maple Rd., Longmeadow, MA 01106. Free admission.

February 28-March 2, 1997: Metroexpo New England '97, Crowne Plaza Natick, 1360 Worcester St. (Rt. 9), Natick, Massachusetts. For information, contact Michael Stern, P.O. Box 199, Towaco, NJ 07082.

March 8-9, 1997: SOPEX '97, Elks BPOE Lodge, 652 Andover St., Lawrence, Massachusetts. Contact Dick Parslow, P.O. Box 1335, Lawrence, MA 01842. Free admission.

March 23, 1997: QPEX '97, Center of NH-Holiday Inn, 700 Elm St., Manchester, New Hampshire. Contact Robert Dion, P.O. Box 1, N. Salem, NH 03037. Free admission.

March 29, 1997: Kennebec Valley Stamp Club presents the 10th annual "Stamp, Postcard and Sports card Show" at the Augusta Elks Club on Outer Civic Center Drive in Augusta, Maine. Hours will be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be door prizes, a dealer bourse and U.S. Postal Service booth.



Two-cent 1954 experimental Silkote paper issue had Maine connection

By John M. Hotchner

Special to the Maine Philatelist

"I think I wish the experimental run of two-cent Jeffersons had never been made. Or at least, that no public notice of the printing had been released! We've been deluged with requests since publication of the article, and have had to be most discouraging in answering them.

"As was stated, the issue was delivered to Westbrook with no fanfare, and for the most part was sold in the regular course by the Post Office. A few collectors obtained plate blocks but, not anticipating the demand, only enough for their own purposes."

So wrote John H. Milliken of the S.D. Warren Co. on May 1, 1962, in response to a collector asking for an example of the two-cent Jefferson (Scott #1033) printed on the company's Silkote paper. The fascinating story of this experimental printing was first told by James Chemi, editor of *The American Philatelist*, in the February 1962 issue of that magazine.

Early in 1954, as the new Liberty series of postage stamps was being planned, the Treasury Department's Bureau of Engraving and Printing was seeking ways to improve the quality and reduce the cost of producing U.S. stamps. One specific goal was to find a paper product that did not need to be wetted down prior to printing. Dampening the paper, used since the earliest days of intaglio printing, had been necessary to facilitate the pressing of the paper into the depressions of the printing plate. That was the only way to assure that the paper would pick up the ink in sufficient quantity to render the design as intended and to carry the characteristic ridged feel of intaglio printing.

A major problem caused by this method was that moistened paper would shrink unevenly as it dried, throwing off the perforating process. Controlling shrinkage had been a priority with the Bureau going back to the early years of the century. Variable spacing of stamp subjects, new paper types, different watermark designs and perforating equipment changes were all tried; some with more success than others.

The problem had not been solved, but even small improvements would make a big difference in cost, since badly perforated stamps made for double-digit waste levels. The Silkote paper experiment of 1954 was a descendant of the blue and clay paper experiments of 1909; the object of which was to reduce shrinkage through better control of the paper content.

But this time a new press was also being tested. A letter

from James H. Austin, the Washington representative of S.D. Warren Co., was quoted in *The American Philatelist* article to explain just what happened. First, the then-current paper, a sulphite paper known as "Oxford," was tried on the new press. The capabilities of the new press included speed three times that of the old; heavier printing pressure; the ability to use a more stable ink, which would give a clearer, sharper print; and the ability to print on paper that had only a small amount of moisture added to the facing side.

I'll let Austin pick up the story at this point: "The perforat-



Figure 1

All two-cent Jefferson Silkote experimental paper examples were produced by plate 25061. The Silkote version, shown at left, is brighter and sharper appearing than the normal Oxford paper example, which is shown at right.

ing was still done on separate equipment, but it was much easier to get an accurate perforation because the sheet had not been so distorted by moisture. Stamps printed on the new press looked considerably improved over stamps printed on the old equipment. The paper that was used for the initial trials was paper that was being furnished on the annual contract by Oxford.

"We figured that a much better looking stamp could be printed from the pigmented surface that we had developed and which Silkote or Printone Litho Plate seemed to provide for stamp printing. We figured that we could get trials on both of these papers and then adapt whichever grade seemed to be most satisfactory in the direction of the ideal stamp paper.

"In this sort of development, we always need printed examples of the paper, and it first looked as though we would be in the dark as to how our paper worked because of the very logical government restriction against giving out printed samples of anything as valuable as stamps or currency. We finally worked out an arrangement by which our laboratory

Continued on page 4

Are examples of scarce Silkote stamps still to be found in Maine?

Continued from page 3

could get samples of the printed work on our paper.

"Preliminary press trials showed that Silkote was a better paper than Printone Litho Plate. Therefore, they (the BEP) agreed to print some Silkote and hold it in their vaults to await a stamp order from our post office in Westbrook, Maine. A minimum order is 50,000 stamps. The Westbrook Post Office ordered the 50,000 stamps with the special instructions that this order was to be filled from a roll being held with the identification 'printed from plate 25061, roll 3/2118.'

"The stamps came in and the laboratory purchased enough for their studies and a few sheets for general curiosity. Unfortunately, nothing ever came of the program. There was a change in administration at the Bureau, and the new administration had more problems than they could comfortably handle in connection with the new equipment. They felt that at that time a different type of paper would cause another set of problems and would also create quite a rumpus in the stamp world if there were pronounced fluctuations in brightness of the stamps that would be printed over the months ahead.

"Aside from that, our Silkote type of paper was more expensive than the sulphite bond type of sheet, and there was no particular enthusiasm toward taking a step toward something more expensive while they were in the middle of an economy drive..."

With thanks to friend Ted Bahry of Carlsbad, California, who sent them, I'm pleased to show, in Figure 1, a lower left plate block of the Silkote paper version, alongside a normal dry printing of plate 25061. I hope you can see, despite the black and white print, that it is much brighter (editor's note: this is a second generation reproduction and may not print well enough for easy comparison).

Also, shown courtesy of Bahry, in Figure 2, is one of the few examples of a Silkote stamp on cover. The cover is addressed to "Mr. & Mrs. Oral McNutt." McNutt, a Warren employee, wrote a note that came with this cover. In says, in part: "I have only three with the Cumberland Mills Station marking that can be positively identified and know of no others. To understand the background that makes positive identification practical, the following history is of considerable importance.

"The Converting Department received a letter from our Boston office dated Nov. 16, 1954, advising of the printing

and outlining procedure for obtaining same and suggesting an order for 5,000 stamps (50 sheets). This was done and the order arrived about a month later. Those of us who desired same were required to purchase in sheets and most people, who were content to own a plate block, mailed their Christmas cards with the balance.

"I was Payroll Supervisor at that time and have checked with the senders of cards from those in my department as to authenticity of this item."

What happened to the remaining sheets at the Westbrook Post Office? Chemi states: "It is known that the Warren company purchased a nominal quantity of the special experimental printing when the sheets arrived at the Westbrook, Maine Post Office. However, it is a certainty that the remainder of the order was sold over the counter indiscriminately.

"This means that a large number from the original 50,000 stamps printed went into general circulation, and may be found on the mail of that Maine area posted during and after November 1954. It is quite possible that covers bearing these unique stamps have gone unnoticed over the years."

Should the Silkote variety have a Scott specialized catalogue listing? I think so. The blue papers of 1909 has major number status in Scott. The two-cent Silkote is also distinguishable from its contemporaries and its pedigree is documented. Pricing might be a problem since I've not seen any of these change hands at public auction.

I'd be delighted to hear from any reader who may be able to add to this story. Write to me in care of Linn's Editor, P.O. Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365 (editor's note: and send a copy of the letter to me!)

(Reprinted with permission from *Linn's Stamp News*.)

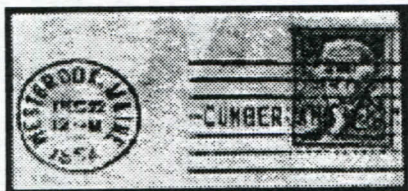


Figure 2:

Usage on a contemporary Christmas card (photographically cropped) documents availability of the Silkote stamps at Westbrook Post Office.

Manchester group seeks 1998 stamp for Samantha Smith

Mainers, and many others outside the Pine Tree State, remember the tragic death in an airplane crash of Samantha Smith, who was invited to the Soviet Union in 1983. A Manchester group, known as the "Samantha Smith Stamp Committee," is seeking help in convincing the U.S. Postal Service to issue a stamp in Samantha Smith's honor in 1998, the 15th anniversary of her visit to the Soviet Union.

"We ask your participation in the undertaking by sending a strong letter of support to the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, requesting that a stamp be issued in July of 1998 to commemorate this young person's effort to create peace."

Address of the CSAC is Room 5301, 475 L'Enfant Plaza West SW, Washington, DC 20260-2420. Address of the Samantha Smith Stamp Committee is P.O. Box 1998, Manchester, ME 04351-1998.

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Maine history found in postal history

By Nancy B. Clark

When at a stamp exhibition or bourse, my tendency is to purchase a folded letter or cover based primarily on the postal or routing markings on its exterior. This is sometimes a sound basis for a purchase decision, but not always the only factor to consider.

Periodically, as the colder weather settles in, I am drawn to a closer examination of the contents of the stampless period letters of which I am so fond. Such is the case in the following letter from James Stubbs of North Bucksport to the Selectmen in Town of Bucksport, penned April 7, 1945.

"I wish to inform you how Millerism Comes on in North Bucksport. Orrington has Drove them from that town, and Last week they took up there (sic) quarters at Rollins in Bucksport and Yates Higgins there (sic) leader and I under Stand (sic) that there was a Lot (of) Boys Last Saturday went out to Mr. Rollins and Broke up the Gang and took Yates Higgins and Drove him a Crost (sic) the River into Frankfort and made him Swear that he would never come into Bucksport again to preach or name Millerism again. Butt (sic) Still this Johannes phinney, wheller Rollins and John Brown are idling away there (sic) time and Destroying what they have got and are becoming poverty poor and the town sill soon have to take care of them if they are not Seentwo (sic). For there is Rollins now got in his Barn one ton of wheat that is not thrashed and the Mice and other Vermin are Destroying the whole of it and he Declare(s) that he will not thrash it -- and if you come up I should Like to See you before you go to see the Millerites if you please -- and I am going away this afternoon and Shall not be at Home again untill (sic) ten Oclock (sic) next wednesday (sic).

Respectfully yours
James Stubbs"

"Millerism" is not a form of religion with which I am familiar, but a clipping from the September 27, 1967 *Bangor Daily News*, citing a UPI report out of Boston is of some help. The article is focussed on the history of an area of Boston once called Scollay Square, since razed and renamed Government Center.

"The Old Howard got its beginnings as a church but was changed to a theatre after the Rev. William Miller, a self-style apostle of doom, miscalculated the end of the world. When the world continued past April 23, 1843, Miller and his 'Millerites' left the area."

It seems that the Millerites were able to "recalculate" the time of doom from the spring of 1843 and had extended their territory by spring of 1845 to the section of the state covered in the content of this letter. Apparently Reverend Miller's approach found a hard sell among this populace too.

THE CLASSIFIEDS

Classified advertisements are free to non-dealer members. You may use this space to buy and sell, trade or swap. Dealer members are asked to contact the Editor for advertising details. When sending an advertisement, please mark it for the Classifieds and indicate how many issues you wish it to appear. All ads will appear twice and be removed unless otherwise indicated.

WANTED

Wanted: Portland, Greenwood and Albany ad. covers, postal history, postcards. Buy or generous trade for other Maine. Charles Brand, 2031-31st Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116. (2-97)

I am interested in trading mint or used U.S. stamps for used (preferably) stamps of Luxembourg. If interested, write to E. L. Skarren, RR1, Box 4972, Camden, ME 04843. (3-97)

FOR SALE

Maine Post Card Collectors: 200 negatives from Art Vu Co., 1930-1940 for making post cards. \$400.00 or trade for Vermont postal history. Paul Cook, P.O. Box 320, Chester, VT 05143. Telephone (802) 875-2118. (3-97)

N.B. A biographic note: William Miller (1781-1849) was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and became a farmer in New York State before he was inspired to found this religious sect. Millerites were also called Second Adventists (for the Second Coming of Christ). His followers went on to form the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863.

Nancy B. Clark is a longtime member of The Maine Philatelic Society and is a resident of Georgia. She is a nationally known philatelist.

Pages from the past

Issue number one of the *Maine Philatelic Society Bulletin* was dated November 1939 and Henry Wing of Portland was the Editor. He wrote:

"(This) is a very humble beginning of what we hope will ultimately be the finest state philatelic publication in these United States. And to achieve this end we immediately ask your assistance in any degree and fashion that is within your power. It is a Maine stamp publication for Maine collectors -- and nothing is too good for our Maine people."

Funny, it sounds like the same cry being made by officers of the Maine Philatelic Society over a half century later! What are YOU doing to improve our Society?



Member Ron Washburn of Skowhegan recently sent a photocopy of this Maine Rural Free Delivery postmark from Skowhegan. The RFD marking shows a date of March 11, 1903, and the CDS appears to show a date of March 18, 1903. The post card is addressed to Mrs. Alice Cahill in Skowhegan. Rural Free Delivery in Maine was discussed in the last issue of The Maine Philatelist.

Why were ping pong balls the key to a successful Atlantic flight?

By Herman Herst Jr.

It wasn't until 1939 that regular flights were made between the United States and Europe carrying mail. Of course, prior to this there were numerous unofficial crossings, many of them carrying mail. One of the most publicized was the Anglo-American Goodwill Flight made in 1937 by Dick Merrill to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI. This was the plane that had thousands of ping pong balls fitted into the wings and tail so that if the plane was forced down, it would float until help came.

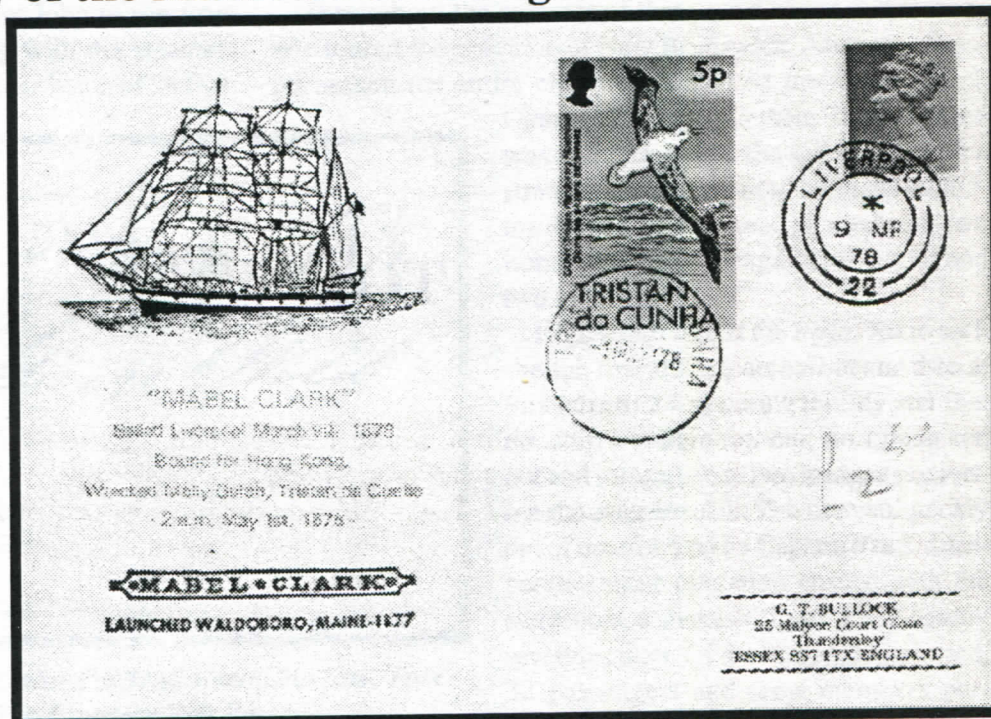
Philatelists financed the flight through the purchase of spe-

cial souvenir covers which were offered at \$7.50 each. The covers left New York on May 8 and bear a six-cent orange airmail stamp, canceled in New York on that date. They waited in London until the 1 1/2d Coronation stamp was issued on May 13. Thus each cover is also a first day cover of the Coronation stamp issue since it is tied with a May 13 London postmark.

At this point, a British cachet was applied and the covers started back to the USA. On arrival, a U.S. stamp was affixed, receiving the New York postmark of May 14, thus making it a round trip transatlantic cover.

Who knows the story of the Maine-built sailing vessel *Mabel Clark*?

According to the rubberstamped cachet in blue at the left of this cover, the *Mabel Clark* sailed from Liverpool, England on March 9, 1878 and was bound for Hong Kong when it wrecked at Molly Gulch on the South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha. The wreck occurred at 2 a.m. local time on May 1, 1878. The lower cachet, in red, indicates the *Mabel Clark* was launched at Waldoboro, Maine in 1877, a year before the accident. The cover was postmarked at Liverpool on March 9, 1878, 200 years after the original sailing, and stamped at Tristan 200 years after the wreck.



President's Message

By Everett L. Parker

Believe it or not, it's a new year, and only three years before the year 2000. The long midwinter season seems as if it lasts for almost a year in itself, particularly for those of us who live in the far reaches of the Pine Tree State. Those of you who live in the more southern end of the state have it lucky!

As you're making your New Year's resolutions, I hope you will consider including a pledge to help the Maine Philatelic Society in some way. There are always ways to be of help, whether at our annual MUDPEX show, serving on the Board of Directors, or writing articles for publication. Our next board meeting is 10 a.m. on February 1 at KVTC in Fairfield, and you're welcome to attend. I'm building a folder of names of people who have indicated their willingness to help when they joined. But everyone needs to help.

Bruce Hazelton had knee surgery in early January and that's the reason there's no update to his book on page seven of this issue. He has assured me that he'll be back in the thick of it for the next issue!

LETTERS

To the Editor:

I found (the article about Chesuncook locals) interesting and memory refreshing. Somewhere, but I cannot recall where, I have a lengthy contribution about the Chesuncook Lake local which I hope to be able to turn up some day.

For many years I have had the stamps both perforated and imperforate unused (except for the head sideways). I should be open to offers of a carried cover. Moreover, in order to bring my collection up to date, I should welcome an offer of the recent triangulars. While I should not be surprised to learn that you are not able ... to fulfil my wishes in those respects, I should be grateful if you are able to suggest any possible likely source of supply.

L. Norman Williams
44, The Ridgeway
Golders Green
London NW11 8QS
United Kingdom

Mr. Williams wrote in November asking about the Chesuncook local stamps Bruce Hazelton wrote about. If you can help, please write directly to Mr. Williams.

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