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Special Issue: Graphic Philately Favorites, Part 2 Members Spotlight Favorites from their Collections

My Favorite Press Stamp

Bruce L. Johnson

Printing presses depicted on postage stamps have always been among my favorites. Examples include Gutenberg’s wooden hand press shown on Germany #723, an adaptation of grape presses used by German winemakers at the time; Dirk Martens’ press depicted on Belgium #B902, a press made in Paris in 1507 by Jacobus Badius Ascensius; and the beautiful rendition of a hand press based upon “Typesetting” from *Orbis Pictus* (1658) by John Amos Comenius, shown on Hungary #2230. There are many other fine examples.

My favorite press stamp shows my genealogical prejudice, since I am, on my paternal side, descended from strong Swedish (Viking?) stock. I am fairly certain that’s sufficient reason to be proud! Sweden #2513a shows Count Pehr Ambjörn Sparre (1828-1921), as well as the Albion Press on which he printed Sweden’s first postage stamp. This commemorative was engraved by Martin Mörck. The 1855 postage stamp that Sparre printed made it possible for everyone to send correspondence throughout Sweden at a uniform rate, regardless of the distance.

Sparre’s Albion, an iron hand printing press, was designed and made first in London about 1820 by Richard Whittaker Cope. Available in a range of sizes for more than a century, Albions were used for commercial book-printing until the middle of the 19th century, thereafter chiefly for proofing, job work, and by private presses.



Fig. 1. Sweden, 2005. Count Pehr Ambjörn Sparre and the Albion Press on which he printed Sweden’s first postage stamp [Sc2513a].

After Cope’s death, Albions were manufactured both by his heirs and by members of the Hopkinson family, who improved the design. From the 1850s onwards Albion presses were manufactured under license by additional firms, notably Harrild & Sons, Miller and Richard, and Frederick Ullmer Ltd. The Albion’s toggle-action, and its distinctive shape and “crown” finial, make it instantly recognizable.

Sweden Post celebrated the 150th anniversary of Sweden’s first perforated stamp in 2005 by issuing a series of commemoratives and maximum cards to honor the occasion. Sweden’s first stamps have been characterized as “aristocratic” because their production was entrusted to a nobleman. All Swedish postage stamps were printed either by Sparre or his associates, G. and E. Scheutz. Sparre drew the proofs, made the original engravings, and initially did the printing in his print shop on Hötorget Square in Stockholm. Sparre also introduced a new perforating device of his own design, the first of its kind in the world, which was used until 1920. If too many stamp sheets were placed on the perforation machine at the same time, however, the bottom sheet could remain entirely or partially

cont. on pg 27

THIS ISSUE

Graphic Philately Favorites	25 & 27–31
GPA News	26
GPA Financial Report for 2018	26
2018 P-G New Issues Scott Numbers	32
New Issues of Graphic Interest	33–36

cont. from pg 25

unperforated. That circumstance created a rarity in 1855, the imperforate 8-skilling banco stamp (Scott #4c). Only two copies are known to exist today.

The first series of Swedish postage stamps had five values. Normally printed in green, the three-skilling yellow error stamp (Scott #1a, where it is recorded as “orange” in my 2014 edition of the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*) has been touted recently as the world’s most valuable stamp. It was printed in 1857, when a three-skilling cliché was inserted by mistake in a plate of the eight-skilling.

Postryttaren is the annual yearbook of the Swedish Postal Museum. The 2005, 55th edition, *Svenska Frimärket 150 är* [*The Swedish Stamp 150 Years*], edited by Jan Billgren, for the first time included English summaries of the articles written in Swedish. The ten authors who contributed articles created a lovely souvenir of this major Swedish philatelic anniversary, upon which I drew when writing this appreciation.



Albion Press manufactured by Harrild & Sons. (Photo courtesy of Auction Team Breker, Köln Germany.)

300th Anniversary of Printing in Colonial America

Mark H. Winnegrad

Before the scope of the Graphics Philately Association expanded to what it is today, one of its focuses was on stamps depicting printing equipment. That interest is still strong now, which gives me the opportunity to write about my favorite stamp in this category: The 300th anniversary of printing in Colonial America 3¢ commemorative stamp.

This special stamp has dimensions of 84/100 by 144/100 inches, arranged vertically. It was printed in purple by the rotary process and issued in sheets of 50.

The central design is a reproduction of the first printing press used in Colonial America; underneath is the inscription “Stephen Daye Press” in dark lettering on a white background. Above, and to the right of the press, in two lines are the dates “1639” and “1939.” In two horizontal lines at the top of the stamp is the wording “300th Anniversary of Printing in Colonial America,” in dark lettering. “United State Postage” and “Three Cents” are shown in three lines in dark letters at the bottom of the stamp. In each lower corner is the numeral “3” in like lettering. All inscriptions and titles are printed in colonial style as used in that period.

The stamp was first placed on sale September 25, 1939 at the post office in New York, NY.

The source of the above information is Postage Stamps of the United States: An Illustrated Description of All United States Postage and Special Service Stamps Issued by the Post Office Department from July 1, 1847 to December 31, 1959. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960.



USA, 1939. Tercentenary of Printing in Colonial America [Sc857].