

Firefighters Put Their

By Tom Fortunato



If you're of a certain age, you may have been introduced to the hobby of stamp collecting as a youngster. And like most activities of youth, you abandoned it only to discover that collection on a closet shelf decades later.

To this day, when my octogenarian father hears that I'm working on my collection, he thinks I'm "playing" with my stamps. Far from it! His mind changed recently only after I introduced him to a subject he could relate to. I figured after nearly 35 years as a Rochester city firefighter, former captain and reserve battalion chief, he might be interested in collecting stamps related to something he loved: firefighting. So may you!

There are hundreds of stamps, postmarks and related philatelic items about firefighting, and more are produced by postal administrations around the world each year. Most can be bought for just a few dollars.

Volunteer firefighting in America can be traced back to the 17th century. New Amsterdam (New York City) fire wardens levied a fine on residents with unkempt chimneys to pay for firefighting equipment used by volunteers as early as 1648, as seen on a U.S. stamp and "first day cover" issued in 1948 on its 300th anniversary.

The days of thinking of firefighters as just "men with hoses" are long gone. Firefighting takes place on land, at sea and from the air; in cities, towns and forests; and around the world.

Stamp on the World



Both men and women have taken up the cause, as careers or as volunteers. Let's not forget that some have given their lives for us.

Would you like to learn more about the collection and study of firefighting stamps? Here are a few online resources you can check out:

- Fire Service in Philately Facebook page: www.facebook.com/Fire-Stamps-Fire-Service-in-Philately-300504260027392
- Firemen on Stamps: http://www.stampcommunity.org/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=22167&whichpage=1
- German firefighting stamp site: www.feuerwehr-briefmarken.de

- Firefighting in Philately (not updated in some time): www.floitgraf.com/firestamps/intro.html



The World Stamp Show is slated for May 28 to June 4 at the Javits Center in New York City. The show includes introductory seminars, hands-on activities for children, stamp appraisers and more than 200 vendors. Find more information on the exhibition's website at <http://ny2016.org>