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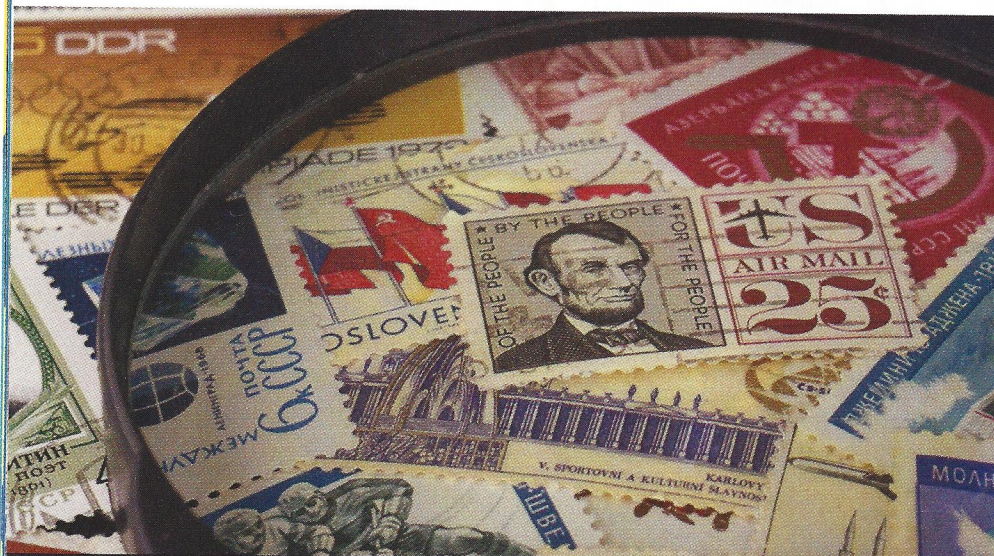
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Amped About Stamps

An old-time hobby finds its place in today's high-tech world



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By FELICE MIKELBERG

WHAT DID John Lennon, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jacques Cousteau, and Pope Francis (as a child) have in common? They all collected stamps.

Postage stamp collecting began in the 1800s, at the same time that stamps were first issued, and by 1860 thousands of collectors and stamp dealers were appearing around the world as this new study and hobby spread across Europe, European colonies, the United States, and other parts of the world. (The first postage stamp, the Penny Black, was issued by Britain in 1840 and pictured a young Queen Victoria.)

Although the rise of the internet has sharply reduced the number of parcels and letters arriving in households, there continues to be a stream of new stamps issued and countries around the world seek to advertise their distinctiveness through their stamps.

"Stamp collecting is a fun and creative way for kids to learn about history, geography, and more, and it's a perfect 'unplugged' activity for families to do together," explained Wade Saadi, president of the World Stamp Show NY-2016, which is held in the United States every 10 years (this year's event takes place May 28 to June 4 in New York City). "Children can fill books with stamps the way they do with trading cards but focus on their favorite subjects. And stamps cover such a wide variety of interests—from animals, art, and planets to music, sports, and cars—that there is sure to be something for everyone."

The World Stamp Show is free, and there's a Youth and Beginner Area with family-friendly activities and events.

And to spark your children's interest, there will be more than 50,000 pages of stamp exhibits, including rare and valuable stamps, post office replicas from around the world, and vintage postal vehicles. John Lennon's childhood stamp collection also will be on display.

If you're looking for a hobby to enrich your kids' minds (or simply get them away from the video games), consider stamp collecting. It's a pastime your children can start as youngsters and continue throughout their lives, and it's portable—you can bring stamps along wherever you go. Stamp collecting is suitable for nearly all ages, and you can collect stamps all year long regardless of the climate where you are located. It does not require any special skills or great wealth, which may be why stamp collecting has often been

called "the hobby of kings and the king of hobbies."

Perhaps the best part about stamp collecting is your kids can find stamps just about anywhere! All you need is a notebook or album to hold keepsakes. Here are a few methods to help start your family's collection:

- **Mail call:** Save stamps from envelopes, packages, and postcards delivered to your door.
- **Pen pals:** Inspire your kids to write letters and postcards to friends they've made from different places you've lived to receive stamped notes back (bonus: they're practicing penmanship).
- **Family shout out:** Contact family and close friends about your children's new hobby. Grandparents welcome an opportunity to correspond with their grandkids, plus they may have collected stamps as a child, too, and may have some great stories to share.
- **Stamp clubs:** Join a local youth stamp club; some are affiliated with the American Philatelic Society (stamps.org).

"For military families, collecting stamps from around the country or around the world is a wonderful way for children to connect to where they have been, where they or their friends may be moving, or where their military parent is deployed," Saadi continued. "They can purchase stamps related to those locations and can also send letters back and forth, adding the stamps from the envelopes to their collection."

For more information about the World Stamp Show, visit ny2016.org or send an email to info@ny2016.org.