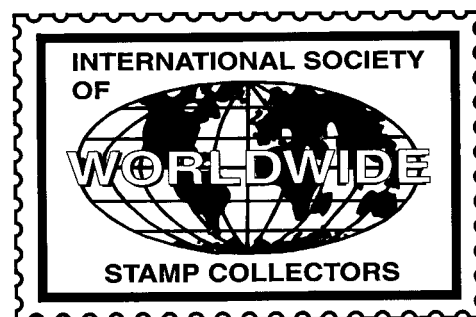


# The Circuit

July/August 2001 • Volume 19 No. 4



Affiliate of: APS (#153) & ATA (#89)  
Current Membership: 609 Collectors Worldwide!

**The Official Journal of the International Society of Worldwide Stamp Collectors**

## Ruanda-Urundi: 1902-1918

by Frank Ceraso (#1420)

**a** lonesome Longcrested Eagle is gliding majestically, high above the snow-clad peaks of the Ruwenzori in southwestern Uganda.

Do eagles fly that high — 17,000 feet? Well, just imagine that this one does. Now it's sailing south, looking down upon the 65-mile long mountain range. Also imagine that there are no clouds, no mist above the massive cluster of ridges and spurs studded with bamboos, tree-heaths, lichens and lobelias, and the air is as transparent as Waterford crystal. Congratulations, with your imagination you could be that eagle! So tell us, what do you see? You have eagle eyes after all, and from up there everything is (ahem)

crystal clear (see map).

To your right, the rift valley of the Semliki River cuts a deep wound on the face of the Earth. Beyond it, a mighty wall of cliffs and the black-green forests of the Congo. "Heart of Darkness," Conrad would say.

To your left, that enormous shining expanse of Lake Victoria. It doesn't look that big? What about three times larger than New Jersey? A little reservoir where Switzerland would fit comfortably, with 10,000 square miles left for swimming.

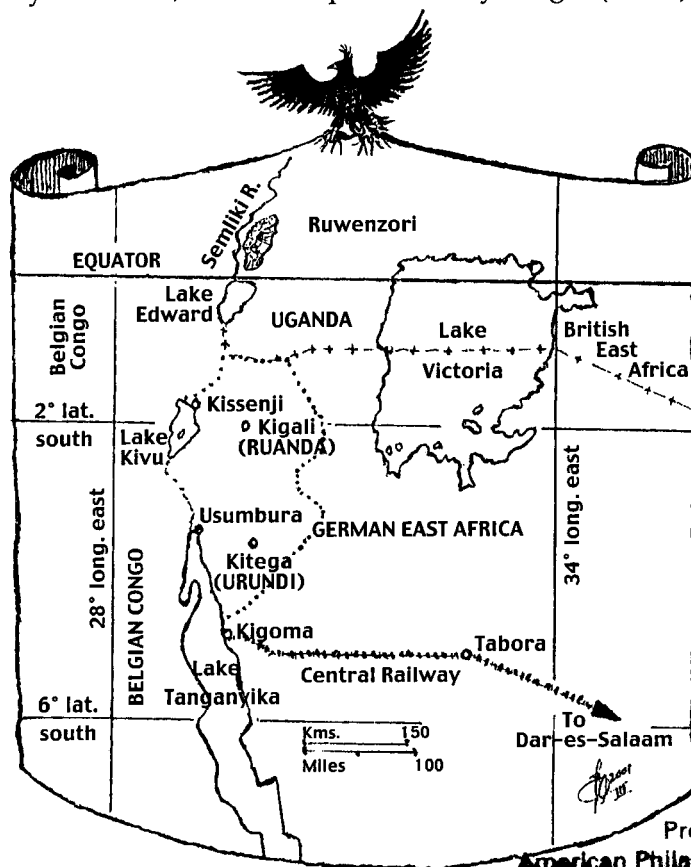
Straight ahead of you, the light-green waters of Lake Edward, then the lowlands of Ruanda-Urundi; low, that is, compared to the Ruwenzori, for the greater part of the region is mountainous and lies at a high altitude — Lake Karago is at 6,000 feet. But beware, this is the land of the Watusis: spearmen and herdsmen of the longhorns, roaming by the thousands amid the rolling hills and high plateaus of the central region.

To the west, the turquoise triangle of Lake Kivu. The Kirutiga Mountains, a jumble of craters and lava fields boasting two active volcanoes, seen only from afar by early explorers such as Speke (1861), Stanley (1876), and Von Goetzen (1894). Were these the legendary "Mountains of the Moon"? Captain Herrmann thoroughly explored them in 1903 on behalf of the colonial government; because the entire area was then part of German East Africa (GEA). Postal facilities were established and GEA postage stamps were utilized.

The first post office to open was at Usumbura (now Bujumbura on Lake Tanganyika, Republic of Burundi) on September 22, 1902. Figure 1 shows the



Fig. 1



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*Phone or send your questions to the appropriate volunteer. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope or IRC for a reply.*

# President's Column

by Tony Zollo (#856) – President and Executive Director, ISWSC

**I**t is time to call for candidates for all the officers of the ISWSC. This includes the President, Secretary, VP for Charitable Services and VP for Public Relations.

The last election of officers produced no candidates for either the Secretary or President except for the two incumbents. Both the current officeholders (Dalene Thomas and I, respectively) have served two terms and are therefore prohibited from running for re-election. Besides, I believe it is crucial to have new thoughts and initiatives brought in to keep the ISWSC moving ahead. IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE HAVE CANDIDATES WILLING TO RUN FOR THESE OFFICES. Please, I ask that you strongly consider running for one of the open positions. The future of the ISWSC depends on YOU!!!!

Continued on next page

## SWAP CIRCUIT

### Coordinator: Randy Smith (#1111)

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pizzazz@cmug.com

*Please remember that the Editor does not mail out The Circuit. If you have any questions about your Circuit mail service, please contact Tom Fortunato or Tony Zollo. Thank you!*

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE:

JULY 20, 2001

# Farewell to a Friend

It is with a sad heart that we inform you of the passing of one of our members. The tragic death of OMNI Manager Jerry Foster came with no warning, leaving us a bit stunned. He had been packing to leave for a planned vacation. We wish Jerry's family comfort during this difficult time.

Jerry was involved with stamp collecting for most of his life — over 50 years. He had just recently been appointed manager for the OMNI Circuit and was looking forward to working with the ISWSC in that capacity.

Please note that Jim Millette of Montreal, Quebec in Canada has taken over the responsibilities of OMNI Circuit Manager. You can contact him at the address on page 2.



## President's Column

Continued from page 2

The responsibilities of these two positions can be found in our bylaws; you can read them at our website ([www.iswsc.org](http://www.iswsc.org)) or I will be happy to send a copy to any potential candidate. If any of you have any questions about the two positions I will be happy to provide answers.

Also, we need someone to step forward and serve as the elections chair. This position simply requires collecting and tabulating the ballots. If you are willing to serve, please contact the current VP for Public Relations, Dave Nelson or myself.

On a sad note, I must announce the sudden, and unexpected death of OMNI manager Jerry Foster. He passed away in late April while packing for a vacation to Hawaii. We are all saddened by his loss and deeply appreciate all he has done for the OMNI Exchange and all participants.

I am happy to be able to announce that Jim Millette, one of the co-managers of the OMNI Exchange has agreed to step forward and take up the overall manager's job. Thanks Jim! That means there should be little interruption of service to participants. However it is critical that all OMNI inquiries and material NO LONGER BE SENT TO JERRY FOSTER'S ADDRESS, but instead be sent to Jim Millette's address as shown on page 2 of this issue of *The Circuit*.

We also are still looking to recruit Regional Representatives for the Western Europe and Australasian regions. Your society needs YOU!!!

Till next time...



# Dues/Advertising Policy

## Dues Information:

Single/Dealer/Club membership: \$12.00\*

Youth membership (under 18): \$10.00\*

**Family membership (up to 4 persons in one residence): \$19.00\***

\*Plus 250 large commemoratives for the Youth Program or equiv. donation in US\$. Dues above are for one year and include six newsletters per year. You may sign up for three years at a time. For an application or further information send SASE or IRC to: ISWSC, P.O. Box 150407, Lufkin TX 75915-0407, USA. *There will be a \$2 per year discount if the renewal is received at least one month prior to the current expiration date.*

## Advertising Policy:

For reasons of accountability, only members of the ISWSC, APS or ASDA may place ads. All ads dealing with philatelic concerns are acceptable. We reserve the right to edit out objectionable language. Advertisers are expected to respond to all inquiries, so be sure you can handle the responses before you offer to trade, buy or sell. If you have a bad result from answering an ad, contact the Editor. We will try to resolve the conflict.

## Display Rates (Camera Ready\*) per insertion:

Full page: \$75.00\*\*

Half page: \$40.00\*\*

Quarter page: \$20.00\*\*

Per column inch: \$5.00

Six repeat insertions of the same ad for the cost of five ads (one free). We will also offer a two-sided insertion for \$125 per issue.

\*Camera Ready means ready to paste up or scan and print. Reductions and typesetting extra.

\*\*Discounts for three or more insertions of same ad. Yearly display rates available. Write to ISWSC past president Tom Fortunato (see p. 2) for special rates.

## Classified Rates per insertion:

First 30 words, including name, address, and ZIP code are \$3. Additional words are 20 for \$1.

NOTE: State abbreviations = one word; "P.O. Box 1234" = two words; ZIP code = one word.

**Make all checks payable to ISWSC in U.S. funds. Send text and payment for ads to the Editor. All addresses can be found on page 2.**

## Ruanda-Urundi

Continued from page 1

2½ Heller brown with almost complete cancel, dated 16/6 05. Figure 2 shows the 20 Heller orange and black on yellow, date out of the picture.

The second post office was opened at Kigali on October 26, 1908, with the cancel bearing the word "Ruanda." Figure 3 shows the 15 Heller ultramarine with a clear cancel, including the date 10/6 12.



Fig. 3

Next was Kissenji (now Giseny on Lake Kivu, Republic of Rwanda) on December 20, 1911. Figure 4 shows the 7½ Heller carmine; it's not tied-to-piece, I just wanted to show the entire cancel. The date is 10/9, the year could be any from 1912 to 1915.



Fig. 4

The last post office in the region opened at Kitega on July 1, 1913; again, the cancel doesn't say "Kitega," it says "Urundi." Figure 5 shows the cancel, quite scarce as it was used only for three years.

Which brings us to World War I. By the way, how is it that these post offices in a remote corner of Africa were still operational almost two years after the beginning of hostilities? The fact is, the war in East Africa wasn't going well for the British Empire.

On August 15, 1914, the Germans crossed into British East Africa (*see note*), seized the border town of Taveta southeast of the Kilimanjaro and raided the railway line Mombasa-Nairobi.

On September 20, the light cruiser "Koenigsberg" sank H.M.S. *Pegasus* at Zanzibar, then went on to raid enemy ships in the Indian Ocean.

On November 2nd, an Anglo-Indian expeditionary force 8,000-strong landed near Tanga, the northernmost port of GEA. Although outnumbered by eight to one, German colonial troops inflicted over 1,500 casualties and forced the invaders to re-embark two days later.

*Note: More properly, the "East Africa and Uganda Protectorates"; Taveta is now in Kenya.*



Fig. 2

After this royal disaster, the British decided to leave the Germans alone, until they were ready to resume operations — but not in the area that we are considering. They asked the Belgians to do the job from their bases in the Congo.

Two Belgian columns invaded Ruanda, one (Col. Molitor) by the north of Lake Kivu, the other (Lt. Col. Olsen) by the north of Lake Tanganyika. The movements started on April 4, 1916. Weather and terrain conditions must have been difficult, or German resistance strong, or both; for it took over two months before the Belgians were in possession of Ruanda. The post office at Kigali closed sometime in June, while we do have a precise date for the closure of Kissenji: June 13.

By June 27, the Belgians had reached Lake Victoria, then they moved south on the respective objectives of Tabora and Kigoma.

The Usumbura post office closed on July 3rd, Kitega on July 6th. On July 28th, Olsen occupied Kigoma, the terminus of the central railway (1,250 Kms. = 777 miles all the way to the coast at Dar-es-Salaam). The Germans had closed the post office exactly a week before.

Here the Belgians used two "overprints" on stamps of Belgian Congo. Actually, they are supposed to be overprints, but some consider them precancels or cancels tout-court. And the *Scott Catalogue* states that Kigoma overprints "were not officially authorized," nor were those of Karema and Tabora — neither mentioned by the *Yvert & Tellier Catalogue*. Be as it may, they were applied to the 1916 set of eight stamps (5, 10, 15, 25, 40 and 50 centimes; 1 Franc and 5 Francs), possibly starting in August 1916 or shortly afterwards. Figure 6 shows the 1



Fig. 6

Franc olive-bistre and black, issued in 1915 and canceled in Congo.

The "sur-charges" — let's call them that way — come in two sizes: a large one applied diagonally in black



Fig. 5

Continued on next page

# CTO Swap Circuit Offer

by Randy Smith (#1111)

In an effort to increase the number of participants in the Cancelled to Order (CTO) Swap Circuit, a special offer is being made. For this year only, the 100 stamp fee to join the CTO Swap Circuit will be waived.

This means that members who are currently enjoying the other Swap Circuits (Regular, Super, and/or Small) but are not currently receiving CTO circuits may do so simply by dropping a note to me requesting service begin.

For ISWSC members who are not participating in any Swap Circuits, now is the perfect time to join! To start receiving CTO circuits, please send me \$2.00, along with your name, address, and number of circuits you would like to be on. (Limit four for this free offer.)

For new and current members, the free offer is

valid only on the CTO circuits and only for up to four circuits. If you wish to be on more than four circuits at the same time, normal circuit fees apply (i.e. 100 CTO stamps for 5-10 circuits). Normal circuit fees apply for all other circuit types (Regular, Super, or Small).

To take advantage of this offer, please write to me at:

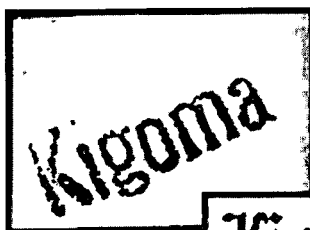
Randy Smith (#1111)  
Swap Circuit Coordinator  
PO Box 21115  
Eagan, MN 55121

Please turn to page two for a complete listing of Swap Circuit Managers. Feel free to contact any of these volunteers for information on this program.



## Ruanda-Urundi

Continued from page 4



Figs. 7 & 8

Kigoma

or violet (Figure 7); and a smaller one applied horizontally in red-lilac. This last one doesn't seem to be a Belgian idea: Kigoma in gothic letters? (Figure 8). All right, I'll stick my neck out.

My guess is that this "cancelling device" was found at the railway station, where it might had been used to mark train tickets, parcels, dispatches, newspapers and the like.

The abovementioned set of Belgian Congo was also overprinted "RUANDA" and "URUNDI" — separately — for use in the respective regions.

Finally, the same set reappeared at the end of 1916 with a dark blue, bilingual, vertical overprint; in French (EST AFRICAINE ALLEMAND/OCCUPATION BELGE) and in Flemish (DUITSCH OOST AFRIKA/BELGISCHE BEZEITING). Figure 9 shows the 15 centimes bottle-green with black center.

In 1918 a surcharged set of Belgian Congo, issued to benefit the Red Cross, was overprinted "A.O." (Afrique Orientale) for use in Ruanda-Urundi; they are the same stamps as above, with the addition of a 10 Francs, blue center instead of black, and red surcharge. They are considered semi-postals.

The territory became a Belgian Mandate in 1924.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Now, what happened to that bird of prey of a century ago?

It is said that some eagles, particularly the Ethiopian species, can live to one hundred years. If our raptorial friend was related to them, it might still be around.

Soaring high above the snow-clad peaks and the rolling hills of Central Africa, lookirig down upon the vestiges of forlorn post offices that have ceased to be.



Fig. 9

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G. REGAN: THE GUINNESS BOOK OF MILITARY BLUNDERS: Guinness Publishing Ltd., Enfield, Middlesex, 1996

SCOTT CATALOGUE 2001, Volumes 1, 3 and 5

YVERT & TELLIER CATALOGUE 1972, volume III.



# U.N. 2001 Flag Series

On May 25, 2001, the United Nations Postal Administration will continue with the stamps of the Flag Series by releasing eight new stamps illustrating the flags of an additional eight Member States of the United Nations.

The countries included are:

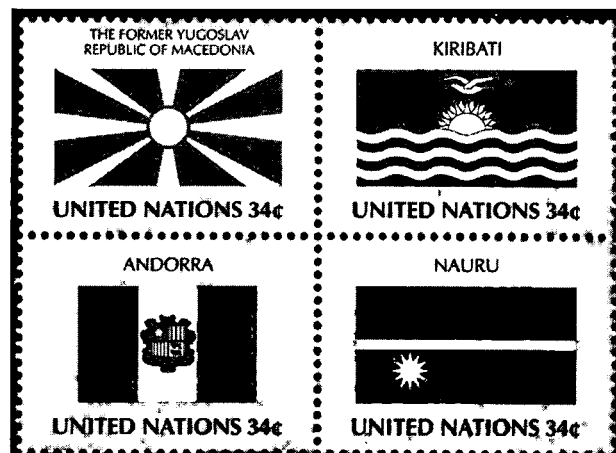
**Sheet 47** — Slovenia, Palau, Tonga, Croatia

**Sheet 48** — The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kiribati, Andorra, Nauru

The flags on the stamps will be identical to the flags that fly outside U.N. Headquarters as of June 30, 2000, except that they will be in true proportions.

Originally launched on September 26, 1980, the Flag Series was created to honor the Member States of the United Nations. Until 1989, sixteen flags were printed each year; after the release of the 1989 series, the program was temporarily suspended, as all flags of the then current Member States had been commemorated with stamps.


With the admission of new Member States in the ensuing years, the U.N. Postal Administration has



periodically resumed the Flag Series program since February 1997. The eight stamps being issued on May 25, 2001, bring the total number of Flag stamps issued to date to 192, including the flag of the United Nations itself.

For more information, contact the UNPA, P.O. Box 5900, Grand Central Station, New York NY 10163-5900; 1-800-234-UNPA; Fax (212) 963-9854; Email [unpa@un.org](mailto:unpa@un.org); or visit the website at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)





## Special First Day Cancel

On May 25, 2001, a special first day cancellation was available at United Nations headquarters in New York.



## From the New OMNI Circuit Manager

by Jim Millette (#1314)

**I** live in Canada and am a graduate in engineering. Prior to retirement, I was employed for 21 years with a major engineering firm.

As a young man, I spent some time in the Canadian army infantry, participating in the WWII European campaign. Unfortunately, I was wounded in Holland three weeks before the end of the hostilities.

I have had the pleasure of collecting stamps for

the past 25 years. I am a member of a few different stamp clubs and attend stamp shows regularly here in Montreal.

My aim for the OMNI Circuit would be to continue the excellent work done by my predecessors. If at all possible, I would also like to make the OMNI exchanges more interesting to the present ISWSC members, as well as attractive to all future members.



# Where Was Bell When the Telephone Was Invented?

by Don Plaskett (#1257)

*Reprinted from the October-December issue of The Postscript (quarterly publication of the Tallahassee Stamp & Cover Club)*

**I**wonder what Alexander Graham Bell would say about the communications revolution he initiated some 126 years ago? Today's automobile drivers would have a problem using Bell's first telephone because it was a 10-inch square wooden structure called "The Gallows", which it resembled.

But where was the telephone invented? Of course, the Russians claim it was invented in Russia and some people still believe actor Don Ameche had a hand in it because of his stellar role in the movie about Bell. I think most people agree that Bell was the inventor, although others, like Elisha Gray, were rushing to the patent office at the same time.

Then there is Canada, which maintains the telephone was invented in Brantford, Ontario, in 1874. You be the judge — here are the facts:

Without any research, I was delighted to obtain what I think was the first Bell stamp celebrating the inventor's 100th birthday, issued March 3, 1947 (Scott# 274 on cover). "Alec," as his family called him, was born on that date in 1847 in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was the youngest of three brothers; sadly, his two older brothers died from tuberculosis at a young age.

In his early years, Bell was educated by his

parents and tutors. At this time, he developed a passion for music and especially the piano.

His inventive genius, stimulated by his father, started when he was

young. Bell loved to bounce ideas and theories off his father, a practice which continued into later years. Bell's first invention was a mechanism for removing husks from grain during the milling process.

One day, Bell's father, Melville, challenged him to devise a "Speaking Automaton." Along with his brother, the young Bell developed a doll that would cry "mama." The doll was so realistic a neighbor called over to ask, "What's wrong with the baby?" Alec's curiosity continued throughout his life as evidenced by a myriad of inventions.

Tuberculosis raged throughout England killing Bell's two brothers. In desperation, he and his parents migrated to Canada to escape the disease. A Baptist minister helped the Bell family relocate in Tutelo Heights near Brantford, Ontario. This homestead is open to the public and is featured in the cachet on my first day cover shown below. A national treasure,



*Canada honors Bell in Millennium Collection*

Continued on next page

## Alexander Graham Bell

Born March 3rd

1847---1947



Dr. Bell conceived the idea of the telephone at BRANTFORD, ONTARIO



Mr. Dick Sargent,  
195 Maitland Rd.,  
Tighes Hill,  
Newcastle,  
Australia



FIRST DAY COVER

## Where Was Bell?

Continued from page 7

the house is a ten room, two-story structure located on ten and one-half acres that cost the family \$2,600, which was quite a sum in those days.

Bell's grandfather was an elocution teacher and his father, Melville, lectured on "visible speech." No doubt this background influenced young Alec who traveled to Boston to teach deaf children. But every summer and Christmas he would return to Brantford to dream, plan and sketch ideas.

During one visit to Boston, Bell met a young deaf woman named Mabel Hubbard; they eventually married. He wasn't interested in inventing a telephone, rather he wanted to develop something that would allow Mabel to hear. On one of his regular vacations to Brantford in the summer of 1874, he told his father how he would build a telephone.

I have listened to an actual voice recording of Alexander Graham Bell stating the telephone was conceived and blueprints developed to produce the telephone in the summer of 1874 in Canada. The recording is part of Bell Canada's Museum in Montreal, which is one of the largest telephone museums in the world.

Bell attended the opening of the first transcontinental telephone line between New York and San Francisco on January 25, 1915. At this time he again stated, referring to the Gallows Frame Telephone, "The instrument just as you see it here was invented in the summer of 1874, during a visit I paid to my father and mother in Brantford, Canada."

On June 3, 1875, using the "Gallows Frame," Bell transmitted speech sounds electrically for the first time. Canada celebrated this event in 1974 with a photograph of the Gallows Frame on Scott #641. Bell completed his patent specifications in Brantford, Canada, in September 1875. In Boston on March 10, 1876, Bell uttered the famous phrase: "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you." This event resulted from a liquid transmitter Bell was using on his gallows frame.

With the financial backing of Mabel Hubbard's father, Bell filed his patent in Boston only moments before one Elisha Gray. Bell faced 600 attempts to nullify his patent, which drained away much of his time and energy.

Upon his return to Brantford, Bell demonstrated how his telephone could be used on the first long distance call. Stove pipe wire was strung along a fence from Bell's home to a general store in Mount Pleasant, Ontario — a distance of about two miles. The first long distance call, however, was made from



*"Gallows Frame"  
on Scott #641*

## A Letter From the Edmonton Stamp Club:

Many thanks for sending me a Youth Merit Certificate to award at our Edmonton Spring National and Regional Stamp Show, March 30 – April 1, 2001. The jury was pleased to award this certificate to Jean-Paul Montambault, who had a two frame exhibit of "Volcanoes of the World."

Many thanks to your society for making this certificate available.

*Sincerely,  
John M. Powell  
Exhibits Chairman*

Brantford to Paris, Ontario.

Bell turned 75 percent of his patents over to his father and went back to teaching the deaf. He never really stopped coming up with new inventions. Among the list is everything from airplanes to new methods for sheep breeding.

Almost every country has issued stamps honoring Bell and recognizing his contributions to society. In 1976, the United States recognized his patent application on Scott #1683. Canada honored him as one with "An Inquiring Mind" in its Millennium issue two years ago.

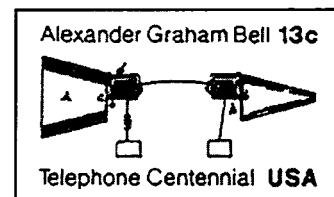
So where did Alexander Graham Bell invent the telephone? Was it in Boston, Brantford or perhaps Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, where he is buried facing Scotland? Or was Elisha Gray the inventor? Bell would be the first to say: "Who cares?"

But now, at least, you know a little more about the scope and character of this Scottish inventor who changed forever the world's ability to communicate.

Bell left you and I with some good advice. He said, "When one door closes another opens, but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us."

### Sources:

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Brochure: *Thanks A Hundred Mister Bell*; Bell Canada; Date unknown (24 pages)



*U.S. Scott #1683  
honors Bell*



**New Members**

2318 (Exp 05/02)  
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599 Manhurst Ct  
Galloway, OH 43119-8322

2319 (Exp 05/02)  
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Rochester, NY 14617-2502  
B(to2000),C,Int,Yrs(3),DD,10(Afr dead countries, Fra & Col to 1969)

2320 (Exp 05/02)  
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604 Aredo De Carlos  
Farmington, NM 87401-4063  
Email: hpeacock@cyberport.com  
A,Beg,DD,7(Ryu,Tur,Afg,Gre,Jap,Isr),Top(Food for Peace,malaria)

**Reinstated (formerly dropped)**

130 White  
716 Schaubroeck  
1822 Engman  
1859 Callanan  
2221 Zarzynski  
2226 Derks  
2230 Dominguez

**Temporarily Away, Contact HQ**  
none**Address Changes/Corrections**

691 Blankenship  
110 W. Elm St  
Sedan KS 67361-1213  
1188 Longmir  
2414 Hidden Valley Dr #2  
Grand Junction, CO 81503-1637  
1364 Navarro  
277 Scarlett Rd, Apt. 2  
Toronto M6N 4L1  
Canada  
1419 Menzies  
Apartado 106  
Comayagua  
Honduras  
1528 Union  
10726 Hiawatha Cir  
Ponka City, OK 74604-2438  
1540 Newton  
6130 Mill Rd  
Somerset, CA 95684-9343  
1542 Armstrong  
6452 Edge O Grove Cir  
Orlando, FL 32819-4127  
2279 Haldimann  
4711 SW 39th Way  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312-5446

**New/Changed Email Addresses**

101 Thomas dalene1@qwest.net  
796 Horwedel ahorwedel@hotmail.com  
988 Shashkin vicstas@udmnet.ru

**Bad email addresses/Returned emails**

(email corrections to Tom Fortunato:  
stampmtf@frontiernet.net)  
none

**Resigned**

1764 Tracey (no longer collecting)  
965 Foster (deceased in May)

**Dropped — Dues Expired in March**

583 Morton  
1096 Grant  
1126 Dunbar  
1481 Amdur  
1517 Sheridan  
1544 Jordan  
1703 Simpson  
2165 Murray  
2173 Thompson  
2174 Blustein  
2175 Buchanan  
2231 Haworth  
2232 Maiorana  
2234 Maniscalco  
2241 Okunno  
2242 Madueke  
2243 Nwauduah  
2244 Onyechi  
2245 Chukwunah-Folorunso  
2246 Usman-Oyowe  
2247 Adekunle Amusan  
2248 Noozi  
2249 Onuekwusi  
2250 Hassan-Odukale  
2251 Nwaforonso  
2253 Okunnu  
2254 Mbanefo  
2255 Imoyo  
2256 Caswel  
2257 Illah  
2258 Igbokwe  
2259 Fariku  
2260 Edu  
2261 Birner

**Change of Status**

686 Montello (Suspended for non-payment of sales circuits)

**Send us your phone number, APS  
and/or ATA membership number!**

Tom Fortunato, 42 Maynard St,  
Rochester, NY 14615-2022 USA

# Online Auction Fraud and The Collector

by Elliot S. Werk, President/CEO  
InsureDeal, Inc. Online Escrow Service  
[www.insuredeal.com](http://www.insuredeal.com)

The Internet has become a major source of quality items for collectors of all types. Private party transactions on the Internet (those that take place between private individuals) are increasing dramatically along with the increasing number of auction and classified advertisement sites. While this upsurge in the availability of quality collectors items on the Internet provides collectors with abundant opportunities, it also leaves the collector open to fraudulent sellers, dishonest buyers, and scam artists.

The purpose of this article is to provide information about private party fraud on the Internet and how to communicate to the online community if you have been the victim of fraud. It is hoped that this information will assist you in becoming a more savvy consumer in the online world.

It is estimated that by the end of 2000, there will be 6.5 million online auction and classified ad users and that they will spend \$7.1 billion at online auction and classified ad sites. According to the National Consumers League Internet Fraud Watch (IFW), reports of online fraud soared almost 40% last year. The IFW recorded 10,660 incidents in 1999 totaling over \$3.2 million. And incredibly, almost 90% of those complaints concerned online auctions and classified ads.

And this represents only the reported cases of fraud. Many more cases likely go unreported because people don't want the hassle of reporting, don't know where to report, get almost what they wanted and let it go at that, or simply don't realize they have been defrauded.

As a collector using the Internet to find and purchase, or sell, collectible items, you have likely read and heard stories about online private party transaction fraud. Christina Platthy lost \$1,815 trying to buy a rare Beanie Baby. Brenda Theos delivered counterfeit Beanie Babies or sent nothing at all to many consumers using a variety of different names to avoid being connected with prior frauds. Hope Larson sent off \$500 for a digital camcorder that never arrived. And the list goes on; and grows each day.

And what is law enforcement doing about the problem? According to a February 20, 2000 article by the Federal Trade Commission titled "Going, Going, Gone, Law Enforcement Efforts to Combat

Internet Auction Fraud" (located at [HtmlResAnchor http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/reports/int-auction.pdf](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/reports/int-auction.pdf)), not much is being done. Local law enforcement has filed few legal actions and cannot be expected to police the online world alone.

The online auction and classified ad businesses meanwhile do not authenticate items, do not adequately police dishonest feedback by buyers and sellers (using assumed identities), expend little effort to identify shill bidding, and in a very few instances offer paltry insurance to their customers. It's a truly grim picture that threatens the prosperity of the industry and the viability of private party transactions on the Internet.

Online auction and classified ad fraud is a complex business. Buyers and sellers employ many different types of scams to bilk honest consumers out of their hard earned money. The simplest fraud is failure to deliver. You send your money and never receive your merchandise.

But more subtle fraud includes delivering merchandise that is not exactly as advertised, delivering counterfeit merchandise, sending broken or non-working merchandise, and sending merchandise that is in materially different condition from that represented in the ad (a problem that has the largest impact on collectors).

But fraud can be even more subtle. Activities like shill bidding and feedback fraud result in consumers paying too much for merchandise and dealing with unscrupulous buyers and sellers. Shill bidding involves sellers bidding on their own merchandise to drive up the selling price. This results in consumers paying more than they should for the merchandise.

In many instances consumers rely on feedback about a buyer or seller to evaluate whether they should bid on an item or make a deal with a person. To boost positive feedback, buyers and sellers will assume different identities (a process that can be accomplished in seconds) and leave positive feedback about themselves. In another scam, some buyers have reported to sellers that they have received damaged goods and asked for a refund; before they actually received the merchandise. They then stop payment on their check and walk away with both the merchandise and the money.

So what should you do if you find that you have been defrauded? First, contact the auction or

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*Speak out if you  
become a victim of  
fraud. Let the online  
community know  
about your experience.  
Someone may be able  
to use that  
information to avoid  
being ripped-off.*

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Continued on next page

# Charitable Services

by Mike Crump (#2126)

**D**uring the first quarter of 2001, ISWSC Charitable Services distributed 98 packets of commemorative and definitive stamps and approximately 20 ounces of assorted on-paper stamps. Fourteen requests for stamps were received for the period ending 3/31/01, including two requests from teachers for their classes.

Your contributions of 250 commemorative stamps are the backbone of our outreach program. Your additional contributions of cash and unused U.S. postage enable the youth services program to help ensure the future of the hobby. Donations of all types are welcome. Unusual donations received this quarter included 20 pounds of on-paper Great Britain mix and a group of foreign commemoratives and CTO's amounting to 20,000 stamps.

I want to thank President Tony Zollo, past President Tom Fortunato, former VP for Charitable Services Jeff Hayward, and others who have

generously helped me with advice, contributions and moral support.

Please send all contributions and requests to the ISWSC Youth Services Program, c/o Mike Crump, P.O. Box 57, Yorba Linda CA 92885-0057. If you have any questions, you can also email me at [stampguy47@aol.com](mailto:stampguy47@aol.com).



## ISWSC Meeting

**H**ere's your chance to join former ISWSC president Tom Fortunato and your fellow society members in an open forum. Come to the APS Stampshow in Chicago's Stephen's Convention Center on Saturday, August 25, at 12 noon for this meeting.

This will be our first meeting in the Chicago area since 1992. It will be your opportunity to share thoughts and ideas with fellow ISWSC members. Join us!



## Online Auction Fraud

Continued from page 10

classified ad site where you purchased the item. Tell them the item/auction number, the identity of the buyer or seller, and the nature of the fraud. Also leave fair and accurate feedback at the auction or classified ad site about the problem buyer/seller (try and be short and specific; avoid ranting).

Then contact the National Consumers League Internet Fraud Watch Center at [HtmlResAnchor http://www.natlconsumersleague.org/](http://www.natlconsumersleague.org/) and the Federal Trade Commission Consumer Sentinel Site at [HtmlResAnchor http://www.ftc.gov/sentinel/index.html](http://www.ftc.gov/sentinel/index.html) and report the fraud.

Next, get active on consumer newsgroups like AuctionFraudAlert at [HtmlResAnchor http://www.egroups.com/group/AuctionFraudAlert](http://www.egroups.com/group/AuctionFraudAlert). Posting specific information on auction and classified ad oriented newsgroups about the type of fraud, the identity of the person that committed the fraud, the merchandise involved in the fraud, and the site where you made the deal, will help other consumers avoid falling prey to the same scam.

When posting messages remember to be clear, concise, and detailed. Avoid ranting, flaming, or other rude behavior since it will decrease the credibility of what you have to offer and may result in your being banned from the group.

The problem of fraud associated with online

auction and classified ad sites is growing daily. If current trends continue, reports of fraud to the National Consumers League Internet Fraud Watch will increase to almost 15,000 complaints this year. And over 13,400 of those complaints will involve online auction and classified ad sites. The scams are many while enforcement and prevention is lax.

Speak out if you become a victim of fraud. Let the online community know about your experience. Someone may be able to use that information to avoid being ripped-off. Who knows, your information may even help to identify and convict one of the scammers.

*About the author:* Elliot S. Werk is the President and CEO of InsureDeal, Inc. ([HtmlResAnchor www.insuredeal.com](http://www.insuredeal.com)). InsureDeal, Inc. is an online escrow company specializing in services to the online collecting community. InsureDeal offers flexible inspection periods to allow collectors to appraise their purchases, screened and categorized links for sites to buy and sell, links to collectors organizations and resource sites, tips for safer online selling, buying, and collecting, and links to anti-fraud resources. InsureDeal's mission is to make online buying and selling safe and secure for all honest private parties. You can contact Mr. Werk at [ework@micron.net](mailto:ework@micron.net).

This is the first in a series of articles about online auction and classified ad fraud. You can read other articles in this series at [HtmlResAnchor www.insuredeal.com/Articles.htm](http://www.insuredeal.com/Articles.htm). ©2000 InsureDeal, Inc. and Elliot S. Werk.



# Advertising

## Classified Rates Per Insertion

First 30 words, including name, address, and ZIP code are \$3. Additional words are 20 for \$1. NOTE: State abbreviations = one word; P.O. Box 1234 = 2 words; ZIP code = one word. make all checks payable to ISWSC in U.S. funds. Send text and payment for ads to the Editor (address on page 2).

CLASSICS from the past and exceptional recent values. I'm a collector also, so you can expect real stamps from real countries. Every selection is an adventure; expect the unusual. Your want list requests are welcome. Jerome Gunderson (#2274), P.O. Box 75, Elgin IL 60123. [7-8/01]

WANTED — MAHATMA GANDHI used/mnh stamps, M/S, S/S, FDCs, commercially-used covers, cachets, cancellations, specimen, colour trials and any related philatelic material. Manohar Balwant Kawali (#2207), "Kawali House" 384, Yadaw Patil Wadi, Veer Savarkar Marg, Prabhadevi, MUMBAI 400 025, INDIA. [5-6/02]

GOOD-BYE to my 70-year old collection of used worldwide stamps. Packet of 100 different regardless of C.V. \$5. Lawrence E. Guethlein (#72), 1300 Reece Rd. #416, Charlotte NC 28209. [7-8/01]

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[7-8/01]

# Announcing a Call for Candidates

The future of the ISWSC depends on you! It's that time of year again and we need your help! You are strongly urged to seriously consider your involvement in selecting candidates for the next election. Whether you step up and run for a position or would like to nominate someone, we need to hear from you. For more information, refer to the President's column on page 2.



## ISWSC Youth Awards

ISWSC Youth Award Certificates were given out during the WISCOPEX 2001 show in May. Awards went to Jessie Robinson from Madison, Wisconsin (age 13); and Cory A. Peters from West Bend, Wisconsin (age 12).

## Where to Send What

### Membership Renewals, Applications, Changes in Mailing Address, Etc:

Anthony Zollo, MD (#856)  
P.O. Box 15047, Lufkin TX 75915-0407  
zolloam@lcc.net

### Annual 250 Stamp Donations:

Mike Crump (#2126)  
P.O. Box 57, Yorba Linda CA 92885-0057  
StampGuy47@aol.com

### Payments for Advertisements:

Jennifer Arnold  
310 NW Juniper Ln, Albany OR 97321  
Ph: 541-967-7043; Fax: 541-967-9515  
pizzazz@cmug.com

### Roster Changes:

Tom Fortunato (#379)  
42 Maynard St., Rochester NY 14615-2022  
stampmtg@frontiernet.net

### Auction Bids & Lots and Payments:

Everett King (#1389)  
P.O. box 127, Whitehorn CA 94586  
stamps@whitehorn.com

### Text for Articles for *The Circuit*, Corrections for Articles:

Send to Jennifer Arnold (see above) via USPS, fax or email. When emailing graphics for publication, please use a higher resolution (150 dpi). Please contact the Editor if you have any questions about format.