

A Stamp-ede in San Antonio!

San Antonio, Texas, is just one of the many places worldwide that is hooked on the more-than-century-old craze of philately—the study of stamps, and stamp collecting. It had its beginnings alongside the national consolidation of stamp collectors and enthusiasts.

This consolidation happened when stamp collectors and enthusiasts all over the United States gathered together in the year 1886 to create the American Philatelic Society (APS). Fuelled by the same keen interest exuded by its present-day members, it is home to the largest congregation of stamp collectors worldwide. To date, the APS has more than 44, 000 members. Because APS is a non-profit organization, the APS has been kept alive by years of continued donation and patronage from its sponsors, marginal revenue (almost like a donation) from the philatelic services they provide, and the receipt of the members' dues.

In the APS level, the organization aims to promote stamp collecting, devise innovative ways and programs to better enhance the benefit acquired by stamp collectors, to offer philatelic services both to avid stamp collectors and the general public, and to assist their members in the exchange or disposal of stamps in their collections. Their continued growth of the American philatelist community is fostered by the various activities spearheaded by the APS.

The APS chapter in San Antonio, Texas goes by the name of the San Antonio Philatelic Association (SAPA). Formed in the year 1896, the SAPA is in fact a life member of APS and the umbrella of the Texas Philatelic Association. It is labeled APS Chapter #388, and as Texas Philatelic Chapter #3. At present, the chapter has over a 130 members participating in their various activities. They even allow juniors, who are between the ages of 12 and 18, to participate in the SAPA when they have at least a sponsoring parent acting on their behalf.

In the year 1996, the SAPA organized a stamp show in order to celebrate the centennial it shares with the Texas Philatelic Association. Labeled TEXPEX '96, it debuted the first new reprints of coil stamps in the country.

In fact, the beginnings of the Texan obsession with stamps began in San Antonio. Alongside the creation of the SAPA was the creation of the Texas Philatelic Association (TPA), the umbrella organization under which various philatelic groups in the state of Texas are affiliated to. To date, the Texas Philatelic Association is one of the oldest philatelic associations in the country that continues its operations even in the present day. Its foundation, called the TPA foundation, was certified as a Texas Non-Profit Foundation, Inc. in the year 1975. This was created in order to encourage the study and research on philately

(through the creation of libraries, laboratories, and to afford research grants and scholarships. The cost of research may be reimbursed once the grant is made to publish any and all study the foundation finds fit.

Membership in the TPA subsequently means a lifetime membership to the APS (as membership in SAPA translates to a life membership with TPA and APS). This membership affords various benefits for philatelic enthusiasts, which include the receipt of the bi-monthly official publication, the Texas Philatelist. This publication covers regular columns, list of upcoming events of TPA and other affiliate chapters, and feature articles of interest to philatelists particularly in the Texas area. Membership also helps members take steps toward the acquisition of much-desired stamps—the TPA allows for free advertising of 'want ads' on the TPA, as well as facilitate auctions for the sale and purchase of stamps between and among members. The association also helps members, particularly those of similar philatelic interests, to get together through the directory of members they provide. Being a member means invitation to TEXPEX, the annual convention-cum-exhibition held annually in Dallas. It also means access to information and answers to queries that may be provided by expert-philatelists also affiliated to TPA.

Like the SAPA, the TPA allows memberships for individuals aged 18 and above. Junior membership is also available for those under the age of 18 but with parents who will sponsor their participation. Membership in TPA is not, in any way, geographically limited to Texas alone.

The San Antonio Philatelic Association continues to be an active member of both the APS and the TPA. Unlike other stamp clubs, the SAPA takes pride in the fact that it remains to be one of the few clubs that meet consistently every week. Meetings of the San Antonio Philatelic Association are held at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Santa Monica, San Antonio, Texas on Fridays at 7:30 PM. For each Friday of the month, there is a pre-assigned agenda for the club; the first dedicated to a business meeting and presentation of the members. The second Friday is, on the other hand, dedicated for stamp auctions, while the third Friday is for a program organized by the members of the club. The fourth Friday of the month, finally, is dedicated to stamp bourse.

In order to help all the members keep up to date on events and happenings in the club, the San Antonio Philatelic Association issues a bi-monthly newsletter called The Philatex.