I gladly confess that many hours of my mid-1950s, pre-teen days were spent buried in the pages of Superman, Fantastic Four, Sad Sack, Archie, and other equally marvelous comic books.

Sheer innocent enjoyment, educational nuggets, and support for good old-fashioned values came my way each time I eagerly poured through a new issue.

When not pursuing those adventures, I readily turned to my stamp collection and I believe I devoted more time to that avocation than to the comic books. But as I recently learned, the experience would have been more complete with the joy of combining the two interests by with reading Thrilling Adventures in Stamps Comics, an early 1950s comic publication from Youthful Magazines [Figure 1].

From 1949 to 1954, Stamp Comics was published by Youthful Magazines Inc., of Canton, Ohio, with editorial and executive offices in New York City. Youthful Magazines (also known as Youthful) specialized in non-superhero titles focusing their attention on humor, horror, romance, and Western genres. The company published notable Western titles such as Gunsmoke, Indian Fighter, and Redskins (later known as Famous Western Badmen), and the science fiction/horror series

**Figure 1.** The covers of issues 1, 4, and 7 of Thrilling Adventures in Stamps Comics.
Captain Science (later known as Fantastic, Beware, and Chilling Tales). Altogether, the company only published 10 distinct titles, with many series changing their name and continuing the numbering of the previous title.

Thrilling Adventures in Stamps Comics — Youthful’s only publication in the hobby genre — may sound somewhat humorous and a bit of a stretch, but the publication was a well designed and skillfully illustrated series seeking to bring to life for its readers the stories behind stamps. In the first issue’s Introduction, the editors promised “glimpses of faraway places, great moments of history, strange legends, tales of horror and wild adventure, all taken from the little squares of paper issued by the post offices of every land.” Each piece began with an image of a stamp followed by the story behind that stamp, told in full-color comic form. Interestingly, the stamp image at the start of the story is printed in grainy black and white with a description of the stamp’s coloring. All of the stamps in the comics were printed this way to deter counterfeiting [Figure 2].

The short-lived publication had only eight issues, but each was a true gem. The publishers even indicated on the far left of the magazine’s cover where to punch holes in your comic so you could store it in a 3-ring binder. All issues had no fewer than six stories with most four to five pages each. The stamps serving as the focus of the stories were both U.S. and foreign issues with some depicting athletes, soldiers, race car drivers or pirates, for which there was a corresponding sports, World War II or high seas adventure story.

Both the early United States Boy Scout and Girl Scout stamps (Scott 995 and 974) were highlighted in issues 3 and 4, respectively [Figure 3]. The famous and rare British Guiana 1-cent Magenta stamp (Scott 13) was showcased in a two-page Issue 5 story. One memorable tale in Issue 4 — “Escape from Maideneck” — began with a picture of a Polish stamp (Scott 545) commemorating the Nazi concentration camp at Maideneck, Poland, which led into the exciting true story of an escape from the camp.

Although the stories seemed reasonably well researched,
occasionally a bit of literary license was exercised by the writers. In Issue 4 [Figure 4], a tale about the Chicago Fire began with Mrs. O’Leary’s cow kicking over a lamp in a barn that we all acknowledge as an old wives’ tale. To this day, no one really knows how the fire began. An Issue 2 story depicted Teddy Roosevelt’s famous Rough Riders fighting on horseback. Despite their colorful name, Roosevelt’s men had to leave their horses behind in Florida and fought in Cuba on foot.

As with many Golden Age comic books, each issue of Thrilling Adventures in Stamp Comics included several enticing, full-page ads for stamps and supplies [Figure 5]. By accepting a one-year subscription to Thrilling Adventures in Stamp Comics, you could choose to receive a packet of “200 unpicked, unsorted foreign stamps” or a “stamp collector’s kit” containing an album, 100 all different stamps and 200 hinges. The White Ace Educator album from Washington Stamp Exchange was offered for only $2.50, complete with a free packet of 500 foreign stamps. (In January of 2016, Washington Stamp Exchange announced that after 76 years it was discontinuing producing its ArtCraft first-day covers due to the decreasing volume of sales that could no longer sustain the high costs of production.)

In several issues of the comic, readers were encouraged to enter a “barrels of fun for everyone” contest called “What’s My Name” [Figure 6] where the reader attempted to identify a person as the main subject of a stamp, hopefully revealed by clues provided in a 2-page story. Readers with correct answers were awarded “two big prizes absolutely free.” The prizes were 100 all-different stamps and an “exciting booklet” with information about “where to look for and identify stamps worth fortunes and how to start a stamp club for fun and profit.” Interestingly, the contest rules did not include a provision of stamps on approval being sent to those who participated in the contest, as did many of the offers in the comics’ stamp advertisements.

Instead, it appears that the editors simply wanted to identify possible new subscribers since the contest rules clearly stated you did not need to subscribe to Thrilling Adventures in Stamps Comics to enter the contest.

The editors and publishers of Thrilling Adventures
in Stamp Comics should be commended not only for providing many pages of classic comic adventures based on the subjects and themes of postage stamps, but for also devoting quality content and stories to the promotion of the stamp collecting hobby [Figure 7]. One- and two-page educational pieces offered guidance on how to collect stamps, how to start a stamp club, and what to consider as a topic for a specialized collection (e.g., topicals, air post stamps, printing methods or perforations).

Enlightening tidbits, with appropriate stamp images, were presented in the “Oddities in Stamps” pages [Figure 8] highlighting such items as a surcharge overprint that blotted out the emperor’s face on an Austrian stamp used by Yugoslavia when it separated from Austria-Hungary and became an independent state. “An amusing stamp oddity” was presented as the Transcontinental Railroad commemorative issue of 1944 (Scott 922) that seemed to depict smoke from the train engine’s stack and a flag to the right of the train blowing in different directions. “Wind can’t blow two ways at once,” explained the writer.

And certainly supporting the characterization of Thrilling Adventures in Stamps Comics being in the Golden Age of comics were pages encouraging community activity and social values, such as supporting the Red Cross, purchasing U.S. Savings Stamps and Bonds and joining Scouting organizations [Figure 9]. It is highly unlikely that such promotions grace the pages of today’s comic books.

Because there were only eight issues of Thrilling Adventures in Stamps Comics, it is reasonable to assume that obtaining issues — and in good condition — could be difficult and relatively expensive. Granted, there are not many comic book or antique dealers selling the comic, but issues are indeed available. At the time of this writing, several eBay offerings are asking less than $30 for various single issues; however, one offering was commanding a much higher price of $300 for a copy of the first issue. Several online comic book stores show all eight issues as “out of stock.”

I recently acquired copies of issues 1, 2, 4, and 7 of Thrilling Adventures in Stamps Comics and I am eager to locate copies of the other issues to relive the excitement and mystery of reading about faraway places, strange legends, wild adventures, and extraordinary events in history. With all of that embel-

Figure 7. Specialized areas of philately were featured in a regular column.

Figure 8. A feature found in every issue is “Oddities in Stamps.”

Figure 9. Charitable causes and social pursuits were promoted in the comic book series.
Own Seven Scarce Mint U.S. Wine Revenue Stamps — Only $9.95

Get this special collector’s set of seven mint U.S. Wine Revenue stamps for just $9.95 — a savings of $13.70 off Mystic’s regular price.

Wine Revenue stamps are missing from most collections — they’re scarce and seldom offered. These stamps have been stored in the vaults of the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum since 1942 and are in mint condition — so you can see every design detail clearly.

Revenue stamps were used to offset major government expenses. This Series of 1941 stamp set was issued to help fund America’s participation in World War II and later rebuild Europe.

The IRS charged a complex tax on wine, creating the need for many Revenue stamps with odd fractional denominations. Applied directly to bottles, cases of wine and even tankers, Wine Revenue stamps are scarce today in mint condition.

Act now to get your special collector’s set of seven mint stamps for just $9.95. You save $13.70 plus get FREE shipping and guaranteed delivery.

Send today and you’ll also receive special collector’s information and other interesting stamps on approval. Strict limit of one set at this special price. Your satisfaction is guaranteed.

Mint-Fresh Wine Revenue Stamps

Yes! Please send me seven scarce mint U.S. Wine Revenue stamps for only $9.95. Strict limit of one set. Shipping and guaranteed delivery is free.

Quick order at Mystic Ad/UF102

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Check or Money Order

Charge my: □ Visa □ MasterCard □ American Express □ Discover Exp. Date

Send to: Mystic Stamp Company, Dept. UF102, 9700 Mill St., Camden, NY 13316-9111

Lished with stamps and stamp collecting, the combination is unconditionally perfect.

References


The Author

Steve Swain is the editor of Georgia Post Roads, the quarterly journal of the Georgia Postal History Society. The journal received a silver award in the literature competition at the 2017 APS StampShow. Steve also writes bi-monthly columns showcasing philatelic websites for Stamp Insider, the journal of the Federation of New York Philatelic Societies, and First Days, the journal of the American First Day Cover Society. One of Steve's philately promotion activities is serving as advertising chairperson for the annual Southeastern Federation Stamp Expo, an APS World Series of Philately show.

SPECIALITY SOCIETIES

The Ephemera Society of America: ephemerasociety.org, which has published articles highlighting philatelic ephemera.

GCCG Collectors Society: https://comics.wwn.co.com. The society provides access to expert tools and resources like the Comics Registry, and dynamic interaction with fellow collectors. The Comics Registry is a place where comic book collectors come together to share their collections and knowledge with one another. It’s a valuable resource for new collectors and experienced fans alike, with a wide range of collections on display.

Comic Book Collecting Association: comiccollecting.org.

American Topical Association (APS #AF0177). The society promotes topical collecting, encourages thematic research, and provides exchange of ideas among members. Bi-monthly journal Topical Time, plus local chapters, study units, handbooks, exhibition and special awards. Dues: $35, outside U.S. $45, electronic $25. Website: american topicalassn.org. Contact: Vera Feltz, Box 8, Carterville, IL 62918; E-mail: american topical@msn.com.

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