

Lambda Philatelic Journal

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"LAMBDA PHILATELIC JOURNAL" is the official publication of the Gay and Lesbian History on Stamps Study Unit. Yearly subscription rate, including membership in the Study Unit, is \$5.00 (overseas \$7.00), single copies are \$1.50.

We look forward to hearing from you, our readers and members, for comments, ideas and articles for future issues.

We encourage advertising and correspondence between readers regarding their philatelic interests.

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EXHIBITING

Paul Hennefeld once again was invited to display his collection of Gay and Lesbian History on Stamps at Stampfest '83, held in Madison Square Garden during September. He had increased the size of his exhibit to three frames (48 pages), thereby being able to include several additional notables in gay and lesbian philatelic history. He was really proud and excited (I, as his mate, can attest to that) when the A.S.D.A. and the A.T.A. each presented him with a silver medal. This particular show had a "topicals only" theme; therefore, Paul was competing only with fellow topical collectors. The judges were demanding, and very few awards were given out, which made Paul's trophies very meaningful to him. It is especially incongruous that the A.T.A., which is procrastinating in establishing our group as an official study unit, has, on the other hand, given Paul an award for the selfsame subject matter.

One of the directors of Florex '83 saw Paul's exhibit in New York and ultimately extended an invitation to Paul to show his material in St. Petersburg during November. We both agreed, since it would also be an ideal opportunity to combine a short vacation with bringing gay and lesbian history to the west coast of Florida. We visited our good GLHS friends, Ken and Ron, while exhibiting in St. Petersburg. Approximately forty collectors had high-quality philatelic material in competition. Paul was able to win a silver-bronze plaque. We thought this show was handled very professionally, the critique by the judges of all the exhibitors' displays quite informative, and almost everyone had a very positive attitude toward Paul's subject matter. As we were walking down the hall toward the display area, we overheard a group of elderly women excitedly saying to one another, "Let's see the gay exhibit first." After the show, we spent a relaxing week at Key West. We stayed at the Oasis. This is a beautiful, clean Victorian guest house with a lovely pool. We recommend it highly.

Immediately after returning from Florida, Paul had to get his act together again and exhibit at his first international show, National '83, once again at Madison Square Garden. Several GLHS members stopped by to see the display, which again received an award.

In the 1 ½ year period since Paul first thought about mounting his random collection of gay and lesbian stamps, as a result of prodding by his philatelic friends, the display has grown and improved nicely. However, in order to ever dream of acquiring a higher quality award, the exhibit will have to be greatly expanded to six or eight frames, and Paul will have to continue that elusive search for better covers, scarcer material, essays, proofs, on and on, all of which scores points on the judges' tally sheets.

It has been an exciting year for us, notwithstanding Paul's surgery in the spring. We hope you all have a wonderful 1984!

Clair O'Sullivan

ATA Life #1746

OSCAR WILDE

By Joseph Fenning
ATA Life member # 1739



1980 EUROPA issue. Toulouse-Lautrec painted the portrait featured on this 13p Irish stamp.

Martyrdom is a term which usually conjures up pictures of early Christians, lions and Roman emperors. Yet, Oscar Wilde, who was none of the above, was a martyr also, because he espoused a minority idea of morality that upset the established view of his day not unlike the first followers of Christ.

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin during 1854. He was the son of a prominent eye and ear surgeon and an Irish Nationalist poetess. His early years were spent in great comfort, despite a sex scandal that rocked Irish society when his father was accused of being too familiar with his female patients. The family fortunes were severely reversed, however, by the sudden death of the elder Wilde when Oscar was twenty. The family moved to London when Lady Wilde was able to receive a government pension.

At his various schools, Trinity (Dublin) and Magdelene (Oxford), Oscar wrote poetry and became the "leader" of the Aesthete Movement which was an artsy, snobbish group of students dedicated to the ideals of beauty.

In 1884 he married Constance Lloyd, an heiress, and fathered two boys, Cyril and Vyvan, who were later given the surname of Holland after Oscar's disgrace. During this period, Wilde's income, other than his wife's annuity, was based upon privately-printed poetry, essays and lecture tours. These tours were often hastily arranged whenever the press of creditors got too close for comfort.

Wilde continued.

Though no names or definitive proof exists from his early years and early loves, evidence shows Oscar had a taste for male companions, a fact that is somehow denied by many of his heterosexual biographers. At any rate, Oscar's first documented male lover was Robert Ross, who was an undergraduate when they met in 1886.

Not long after tasting the joys of male love, Oscar's literary talents seemed to finally arrive. His writing became prolific and more importantly for him, financially rewarding. A successful collection of fairy tales, The Happy Prince, was followed by a furor over the "Portrait of W.H." which speculated that a boy actor was the inspiration of the Shakespearean sonnets. Next came a scandalous book (his only novel), The Picture of Dorian Gray. In 1892 he achieved extreme success as a dramatist with "Lady Windermere's Fan", a comedy about manners and morals. This play was followed by another, "A Woman of No Importance". During 1894 he wrote a very decadent "Salome" which was not allowed to be performed publicly in England. This setback was short-lived, as he scored a dazzling success with "An Ideal Husband" and "The Importance of Being Earnest". As a playwright, Oscar seemed to shine ever brighter with each new play. His silver lining did not appear to have a cloud attached.

Personally, Oscar's life was not very tranquil. Late in 1891, he met Lord Alfred Douglas, the younger son of the Marquess of Queensbury. Wilde instantly fell for the classic beauty of the boy. Douglas, himself only interested in young men, enjoyed the flattering attentions of the older genius. During the ensuing years, Douglas kept their sexual relations to an absolute minimum but delighted in shocking London Society to the fullest by posing as "Oscar's boy". Together, they were to live out one of the most tragic relationships in the history of gay people.

Things finally came to a head in 1895 when a roman à clef called The Green Carnation appeared in which Wilde and Douglas were broadly satirized. Green, at the time, was the color of homosexuals, not unlike lavender is perceived today. Though published anonymously, the book was generally thought to have been written by Wilde, himself. In a rage at having his son ridiculed, Queensbury arrived at Wilde's club and left a card - "To Oscar Wilde, posing as a sodomite (sic)". Oscar, despite advice from his friends, sued for libel. Within two days after the start of the trial, Wilde withdrew his suit. Irreparable damage was wreaked by the testimony of the boy prostitutes who were called in as defense witnesses. That same evening, Oscar was arrested on charges of homosexuality.

The trial that followed ended five days later in a jury disagreement. The third trial ended with Wilde receiving a sentence of two years hard labor. While in jail, he wrote a long confessional essay to Douglas called "De Profundis".

Out of jail, divorced, bankrupt, deprived of his children and his life ruined, Oscar wrote his last work - "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", a poem about the inhumanity of prison life. Wilde drifted to Paris and then to Italy where he had a reunion with Alfred. The arrangement did not work well and after a quarrel about money, they parted. Back in Paris, the writer lapsed into heavy drinking and died November 30, 1900 of a brain abcess, two years after his release.

Oscar Wilde continued.

Wilde was first buried at Bagneux Cemetery, in Paris, but in 1909 his remains were interred in Pere La Chaise where a large angel-like sculpture marks the place. Carved on the back of the monument are lines from "Reading Gaol":

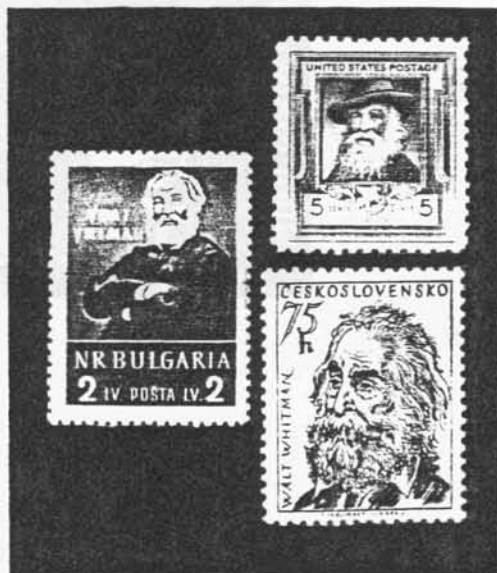
And alien tears will mourn for him
Pity's long broken urn
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn.

The Republic of Ireland (Eire), the country of his birth, honored Oscar Wilde on a 13 pence stamp for the 1980 Europa issue. Toulouse-Lautrec had visited with Wilde the evening before his last trial. His sketch of the playwright was done immediately after this visit. The artist filled in the background with a quick wash sketch of the Houses of Parliament to give it a London atmosphere.



Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt, by Jules Bastien-Lepage, issued May 16, 1945, commemorating the 100th. anniversary of her birth.

Oscar adored Sarah Bernhardt. The actress starred in many of his plays. When she was in England the playwright helped secure her fame. She in turn did nothing to help him during or after his imprisonment.



During Oscar's visit to the USA in 1882, he met with Walt Whitman in Camden, NJ. The two poets had a fine time together, posing for photos, and talking to the press. Afterward Walt treated Wilde to homemade elderberry wine and milk punch.



Painting of George Bernard Shaw, by Alick Ritchie. Europa issue, May 7, 1980.

Shaw was not a close friend of Wilde; however, he drew up a petition seeking Oscar's pardon and release from prison. Few persons would sign the document.

BOOKS OF INTEREST



Willa: The Life of Willa Cather.
By Phyllis C. Robinson
Doublday, NY, 1983

Thomas Mann Diaries, 1918-1939.
Selection & foreword by Hermann
Kesten, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., NY., 1982

The Life of Lorena Hickok, Eleanor Roosevelt's
Friend. By Doris Faber, William Morrow & Co.,
NY., 1980



Melville

LAST LICK

New issues for 1984 are:

August 1, Herman Melville

October 11, Eleanor Roosevelt



From 'The Body Poltic'
Canada's Gay newspaper.



The Swedish government has issued a special
post office cancellation mark in honour of Gay
Pride Week in Stockholm, August 15 to 21.
Celebrations organized by RFSL Stockholm in-
cluded a march through the city, an art show
and an interfaith church service.

Martin Greif has included a photo of Paul
Hennefeld with his stamp exhibit in his
The Gay Engagement Calendar 1984. It can
be ordered from:

The Main Street Press
William Case House
Pittstown, NJ 08867

@ \$6.95 plus \$1.25 postage/handling.