

let's talk EXHIBITING

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DISPLAY EXHIBITS: PART I

Perhaps the exhibit type which allows for the greatest latitude in its formation is the “display exhibit”. Multi-frame display exhibits are entered in the same General Class that also includes traditional, postal history or thematic exhibits, and are eligible for most awards, including the Grand and Reserve Grand awards.

What differentiates display exhibits from other philatelic exhibits is that such exhibits may also contain

a variety of non-philatelic items that nevertheless directly relate to the story line of the exhibit. As the new Manual of Philatelic Judging and Exhibiting states, “the extensive and varied inclusion of non-philatelic material distinguishes a display exhibit from all the other types. You are allowed the widest freedom of expression in a display exhibit, yet the framework of your exhibit is still philatelic”. Thus as long as the exhibit holds together as essentially a philatelic exhibit, and



that the philatelic items clearly carry the story line, other items may be included.

Display exhibits perhaps also tap deeper into both our creative and our acquisitive sides, as many of us may perhaps collect collateral material that we would otherwise like to exhibit.

And the choice of such collateral material is great. One may, for example, decide to include postcards, bank notes, newspaper clippings, letters, autographs, coins or medals, engravings, original maps, bookplates, playing cards, match book covers, permits or licences – in fact anything that can be mounted onto a page and thin enough to fit behind the Plexiglas of an exhibit frame. (Of course, dangerous or illegal items are prohibited.) As long as such items relate directly to your story line, and do not seem to overwhelm the philatelic items, they are all fair game.

A frustration of some thematic exhibitors is that they quite regularly cannot find philatelic material to illustrate some aspect of their story as such philatelic material may simply not exist. Display exhibits, allowing for inclusion of some non-philatelic material, thus help overcome such shortcomings. But it is not just thematic exhibitors who find it beneficial to include non-philatelic material. Indeed, most all the rest of us too may wish for an opportunity to include other material to augment and expand upon our philatelic showings. For example, while in postal history exhibiting some non-philatelic material has always been



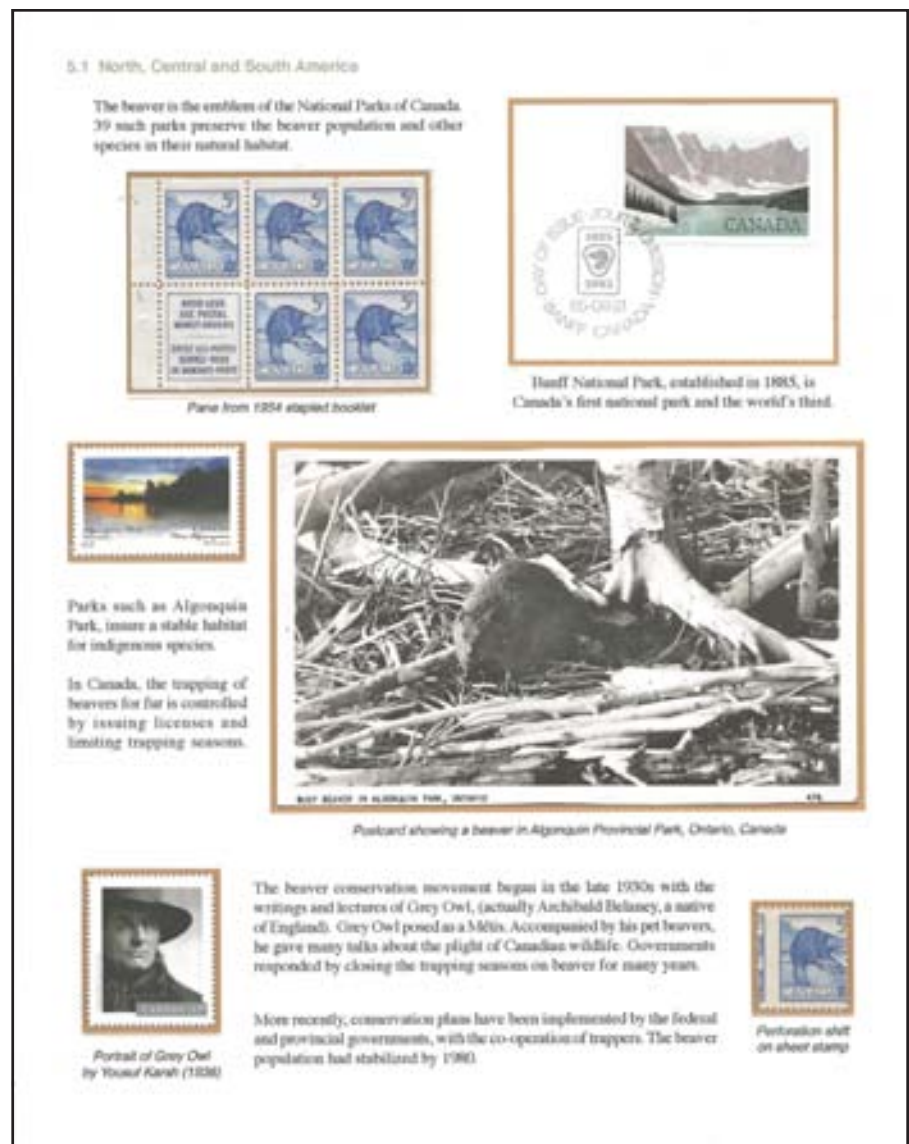
permitted, the same exhibit reborn into Display would allow for a much greater amount, and even an occasional whole page could be shown with little or no philatelic material on it. The same could be said for aerophilatelic display exhibits that might wish to include original photographs, postcards, route maps, or timetables to augment the philatelic material and its story line.

In fact, trying to think outside the boxes of “thematic” or “postal history” or “aerophilately” and think instead “display” takes us into a whole new realm of possibilities. (Part II of this column will discuss this a bit further, as we will look at a Display exhibit from a postal history perspective.)

Let’s take a look at a Display example that approaches from a thematic perspective. Larry Davidson of Ontario is an accomplished thematic exhibitor, and his five-frame Display exhibit “Beavers – Nature’s Engineers” won the Grand Award at the 2015 American Topical Association NTSS convention. His exhibit is a logical extension beyond a traditional thematic exhibit as he makes very judicious and intentional use of his non-philatelic items to augment his thematic development.

The first page shown, a page from his “5.1 North, Central and South America” section, discusses beavers and their conservation within Canada’s national parks. Looking very much like a thematic page, he nevertheless also displays a postcard. In his words: “The postcard was the perfect item to illustrate the conservation of beavers and their habitat in a Canadian park.” In fact, it is unlikely he could illustrate a beaver in its Canadian habitat, a thematic point he was determined to make, without recourse to such a postcard.

The second page shown, a page from his “1.4 Family Life” section, includes a greater variety of non-philatelic elements. Noted are a Canadian Bank Note Company engraving (perhaps prepared for a security document), a Russian coin, and a Belarus banknote each depicting a family group of beavers. The only philatelic item is the piece of Russian



postal stationery illustrated with beavers and including a postage stamp depicting a beaver. (On other of his pages, his non-philatelic material includes a small piece of scrimshaw inscribed with a drawing of a beaver, and even a sample piece of fur from a beaver pelt – such is the creativity in including such additional materials.)

Note on both of Larry’s pages that the philatelic material still remains predominant. Although Display exhibit pages can include pages of only philatelic material, pages of non-philatelic material, or pages that include both, the final balance to the exhibit must still weigh out in favour of the philatelic material.

Also note the general impression of neatness and orderliness to his pages. For example, he mats each of his items, printing directly onto his

pages a coloured border behind each item (in his case a light brown) that complements many of his included items. Another of his techniques that may not be immediately obvious on these two illustrative pages is his regular use of “windowing”; i.e., showing the important part of an item through a cut-out on the exhibit page, mounting the full item instead to the back of the page and where the important part then shows through on the front of the page. An important technique in thematic exhibiting, it can be used in many other types of exhibits as well.

In conclusion, non-philatelic material can be put to quite judicious use in Display exhibits. For those of us who collect “paper ephemera”, such items are natural candidates for inclusion in our philatelic exhibit pursuits. ☒