THE MODEL STAMP COLLECTOR
BY RAYMOND S. BAKER
(The Montreal Philatelist, Vol. 1, No. 8 – January 25, 1899)

In the world of philately there are so many different classes and divisions that it is a difficult matter to select a model that shall be suitable and applicable to all. The advanced collector, the specialist, the general and the occasional collector, each have their standard of excellence, their acme of perfection. He therefore, who would create a type meeting with universal satisfaction must needs attempt the impossible.

It may not, however, be a hopeless task to enumerate some of the leading qualities and attributes found in the model stamp collector, and even to make an analysis of the constituent elements of the ideal. While it is true that the majority of philatelists are anything but models, and that a continual exhortation and improvement is not only tiresome, but comparatively worthless, yet there is a certain amount of interest in finding out from a fellow collector his conceptions of the highest and the best, even if they differ materially from our own. With this short introduction, let the model collector step forth and demonstrate his claim to this lofty title and also, with some latitude, point out the way by which others can attain to the ideal state.

He is general collector. But a large division of the body philatelic need not be offended, for the model stamp collector has a specialty, although he is not a specialist. There have been many battles fought on the question of generalism versus specialism with more glory and ultimate superiority to the latter. It is not the intention of the writer to inaugurate another contest as every species of collecting has a right to exist. We have reached an age of philatelic toleration, in which everyone collects just what he pleases. Who then shall dare to assume the province of commending this branch of collecting and condemning that which happens to be dissimilar? But when it is necessary to choose a specimen which shall stand for the whole class, to form a model representative of the great philatelic division, to set forth a fitting example for the inspection of the entire world, then it is imperative that distinctions be made, and consequently the general collector is emphatically the result of our choice. The simple fact that he is international in his aims and collecting instincts, and is not monopolized by any single feature of the pursuit, is perhaps the strongest argument in his favour. To successfully represent a many sided hobby he is necessarily a collector of wide interests and all embracing sympathy. He admires alike the stamps of Canada and China, Japan or Borneo.

But the model stamp collector while essentially devoted to general collecting and making it his primary object, has nevertheless a specialty, and thus increases the security of his position as a satisfactory model. Specialism has secured such an extensive hold on stamp collecting that its claims cannot be overlooked, and he who would pose as a model among philatelists must devote no small amount of his time and attention to some particular phase of the pursuit.

Postage stamps only, will be found in the album of the model collector. He has nothing whatever to do with revenues and while not hostile {sic} disposed towards them, considers that they are irrelevant and beneath the dignity of postal commissions. It may be argued that the general tendencies of the model stamp collector should lead him to admit fiscals to his patronage, but in reply to this it can be stated that
limitation must somewhere be drawn, and consequently he is distinctly a *postage* stamp collector and nothing more. Revenue stamps are all very well in their place, and their collectability is not to be doubted. The present craze for them however, to the exclusion of good postage, is not to be commended as it lowers the standard of philately.

The model stamp collector aims at completion, although he does not strive after it to the detriment of his general collection. His stamps are especially strong in those countries which have comparatively few varieties, and which are obtainable at an average cost. He keeps up with the new issues in good fashion, choosing those he deems valuable and authentic.

Above all things the perfect stamp collector is not a speculator. It is entirely contrary to his nature to assume such a character. While he finds a certain amount of pleasure in the financial side of the hobby, yet all ideas of gain and profit are wholly foreign to him. He buys stamps in the regular way, but has a tendency to see specimens before purchasing. He is not a “condition crank,” but the contents of his album show careful selection. While unused specimens predominate to a certain degree, yet the cancellation and the postmark are fully in evidence. As regards neatness and attention details, he is all that can be desired. If asked regarding his real object in collecting, the model philatelist will tell you that it is pleasure and amusement, and out of this there grows a desire to know more about his stamps and almost unconsciously he makes an exhaustive study of his specimens, and for this his fellow collectors dub him a scientist. His is a labour of love, and he confines his researches, not to any particular country, but to his whole collection.

It is in the local, state and national societies that the ideal stamp collector is found in his glory. Not only are his dues paid regularly, but he takes an active, lively interest in everything that is going on. If new members are to be secured, if an especially laborious piece of work is to be performed, or if the welfare of the society may be served in any way, the model stamp collector is immediately to the front offering to do his utmost – and he does it. In political campaigns his voice is not heard, except in exposing some flagrant abuse; but if the obligations of offices are heavy and not to be envied he does not hesitate to assume the burden. He patronizes every department of the organization and induces others to do likewise. As an investigator of fraud he is persistent and strives to become by every means a “terror to evil doers.” He is the real backbone of the philatelic association and stands true to it in times of dullness and adversity.

The model stamp collector is a missionary worker. To an earnest conception of the future of philately, he adds a generous and unselfish disposition. He hides not his light under a bushel, but seeks to extend the domain of stamp collecting by acquainting others with a fascinating and instructive recreation. It is ever a pleasure to him to show and explain his collection and any interest displayed on the part of the listener is always followed up by a direct canvas, in which the claims of stamp collecting are intelligently advocated. He has a goodly supply of duplicates and is free in their dispersion among non collecting friends. To the small boy and beginner the model Stamp collector is indeed a friend. No matter is too trivial, no trouble too great for his consideration. Such difficulties as watermarks, shades, and surcharges are willing explained, and his guiding hand helps the tyro to surmount other stumbling blocks. The ideal collector sees the wisdom of increasing the number of philatelists and governs his actions accordingly.
All the leading periodicals devoted to the pursuit will be found on the study table of our model. They are carefully read and are nicely bound volume for volume. While possessing an extensive philatelic library he is not a literature collector in the ordinary sense of the term. He subscribes to the current magazines and buys old journals and books pertaining to the hobby, not for the mere desire to possess them, but for the laudable purpose of instruction and self-improvement. His great knowledge of stamps obtained by ceaseless study and research, and his determination to propagate a scientific philately, lead him to make valuable contributions to the literature of the day. In the philatelic press his voice his heard on the leading questions of the time. He does not pose as a regular writer, and for this reason perhaps his productions are always well written and of high literary merit. Seclusion is not some of the characteristics of the model stamp collector but rather union and the being in touch with his fellows. Thus he is not entirely dominated by any one territorial division of philately, but is fully awake to the existence of the pursuit as a whole. He is conversant with affairs in England and Germany as in America.

To fully describe the model stamp collector, as he is, would require a long and elaborate work. In these pages an attempt has been made to point out a few qualifications which are deemed necessary. Much has been left unsaid, but the reader can supply requisite details from his own conception of the ideal. The present standard is not too high for emulation, however, and it is a matter of satisfaction that collectors do exist who fulfil the required conditions.