

Grandmother helped native Cleveland get his collecting start from birth in 1947

Note: GP associate member William G. Armstrong Jr. of Westport, Connecticut, shared the following reflection on his introduction to philately. He can be contacted at billarmstrongjr@gmail.com.

Dennis Sadowski's cover note accompanying the September Perryscope invited members to share a recollection of our introduction to stamp collecting. Mine has strong Cleveland roots.



Armstrong

Apparently, I was destined to be a stamp collector from the day of my 1947 birth in Cleveland. My paternal grandmother faithfully sent for first day covers and usually included a newspaper clipping describing the stamp.

In the mid-1950s the articles were written by Plain Dealer stamp columnist Don Grieve.

In time, my grandmother addressed the covers to my parents' home in Berea. I saved them all. Like many boys of the era, I also acquired stamps at the post office, traded with other kids, rummaged through grandparents' attics and inherited a few collections from neighbors or friends.

My most memorable experiences took place downtown at the counter of an ancient stamp dealer, J. E. Ewald in the Arcade. On a budget, my grandmother let me select stamps from his stock books to build my U.S. collection.

My biggest single purchase then added the 50-cent "Baby Zep" to my collection for \$9. Classics like Scott 1 were too rich for my young



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WILLIAM ARMSTRONG JR.

GP associate member William Armstrong Jr.'s collection includes the first day covers and news clippings sent to him by his grandmother in the 1950s.

blood; that one listed for \$35. To this day, I still smile when I pass that location in the old Arcade.

Other dealers were downtown, too. I frequented the Terminal Tower Stamp Shop while attending St. Ignatius High School in the mid-1960s, supplementing my collection with good quality issues using my Cleveland Press paper route money.



Bill Armstrong Jr. purchased this "Baby Zep" on an excursion to a Cleveland stamp shop as a youngster.

In that era, many towns had storefront stamp shops, as did Berea. A dealer opened a shop on the old Triangle downtown where I picked up many Ohio covers from the 1880s. I recall attending a big stamp show — perhaps the March Party — at the Cleveland Convention Center with a classmate.

When professional life brought me to New York, I frequented Nassau Street to see some of the few remaining dealers.

In time, each collector will specialize in a few countries or topics. I augmented my lifelong interest in balloon flight with a big lighter than air collection, once even collaborating with the Rubber City Stamp Club to create and sell covers I had flown in my club's gas balloon.

In recent years, as an associate member of Garfield-Perry and as president of the Norwalk Stamp Club in Connecticut, I have looked forward to returning to each year's March Party, where my roots and memories remain strong.