

Birmingham - Ferndale Stamp Club Newsletter



March 2026

March in Michigan is an in-between month. The snow hasn't quite given up, the sun hasn't quite committed, and collectors across the state find themselves in that familiar early-spring rhythm: part cabin fever, part renewed curiosity. It's the perfect time to pull out an album you haven't opened in a while, revisit a research thread you set aside in December, or finally sort that stack of covers you promised yourself you'd get to "after the holidays."



Scott #2271

St. Patrick's Day has been celebrated on March 17 for centuries. It is the date generally considered to be the day St. Patrick died in 461.

February meetings were well attended with a special guest at our meeting on the 17th. C. Thomas Naumann who said he joined the Birmingham club in 1958, was kind enough to share early copies of documents from both the Birmingham and Peninsular State Philatelic Society stamp clubs.

The Club approved BIRMPEX 2026 to be held on April 12th (a one-day show) at the

Infinity Hall, 6650 East 14 Mile Road. Fraser, 48026. The event will be cosponsored by the Pontiac Stamp Club and Martin Brown is Show Chairman with Phil Vallelunga assisting. If the show is successful, we may plan the next FERNPEX show at the same location. Finally, a stamp show on the east side!

President Rusch reported filing the annual report and paying the \$20 fee to maintain the club's non-profit status with the State of Michigan.

Club Meetings –

March 3rd & 17th, 6:00 p.m. at the NEXT Senior Center, Birmingham.

Upcoming Events –

March 6 & 7, Michigan Stamp Club Show at Sokol Cultural Center, Dearborn Heights, Friday 10-5, Saturday 10-4

March 13-15, Garfield-Perry Stamp Club Show, Strongsville, Ohio, Friday 10-6, Saturday 10-6, Sunday 10-3

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Wool Industry

Pat Hensley

The 6¢ American Wool Industry Issue postage stamp (US Scott #1423) was issued on January 19, 1971, in Las Vegas, Nevada. It was one of the first United States, UV-Light-Activated, phosphorus-overprinted, (tagged) postage stamps used to enhance mail-handling by the Post Office Department. It was designed by Dean Ellis and printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

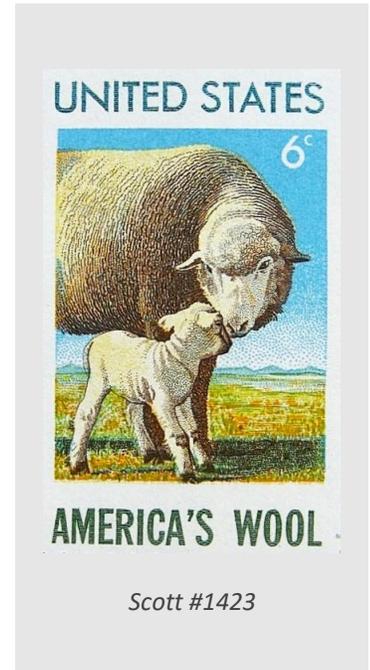
Wool has been used in Europe since 10,000 BC and Cortez brought it to America in 1521. This stamp commemorates the 450th anniversary of that event.

There are more than 1000 sheep breeds in the world. Merino or Rambouillet make fine wool which is used in clothing because it is so soft. Romney or Blackface breeds make thicker wool and are used for interior decor, carpets, bedding, upholstery insulation, and protective clothing for firefighters and soldiers.

In 1789, King Charles IV of Spain gifted six Merino sheep to the Dutch. Then these sheep ended up in South Africa and were sold to a British entrepreneur John Macarthur, who took them to Australia. 80% of the Merino wool used in fashion today is produced in Australia. 1.2 billion sheep produce almost 2 million kilograms of raw wool for home and clothing. Other leading producers are Argentina, New Zealand, South Africa, the United States and Uruguay.

Wool can vary in color, texture and length, depending on the breed of the sheep, the country they come from, the food they eat, and even the climate-weather they live in.

The interesting feature about wool is its composition. It is made mainly of a protein called keratin which is also in human hair, nails and other animal fiber. It gives elasticity, strength and the ability to withstand bending and stretching over time. If you got a close look at the fiber under a microscope, you would see that the fibers have overlapping cuticle scales that look like shingles on a roof. These scales protect the inner layer of the fiber known as the cortex. In the cortex are the main keratin fibers bundles to form a helix. Beyond the cortex is the medulla, the central part of some wool fibers that account for crimp or waviness of the fibers. This crimp gives the fiber its insulating property by trapping air and enhancing warmth.



The average diameter of wool fibers is measured in microns. A micron is one-millionth of a meter or approximately 0.000039 inches. This is a standardized way to measure the thickness of fibers. This thickness determines the quality and characteristics of wool. Finer fibers (softer), have smaller measurements and coarser fibers (rougher), have larger ones. Fine wool is used in clothing because it is softer and touches the skin which means it will probably not be itchy. Coarser wool (with the higher micron count) is more suitable for fabric that needs to be durable like rugs, blankets, upholstery, and coats. Micron counts can differ from wool taken from different parts of the sheep. Wools from the neck and legs are usually coarser than the back.



Many of my friends know that I'm a passionate knitter and my favorite fiber is wool. Fiber festivals are held all around the United States and throughout the year, but my favorite is the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival which usually takes place the weekend after Mother's Day. The festival features Sheep Shows to rate various breeds of sheep, and dog-herding demonstrations. hundreds of fiber vendors, a fleece (fiber from different sheep) auction, and even a Sheep to Shawl competition. During the Sheep to Shawl competition, registered teams of 6 people have to shear a sheep, comb the fiber, and then spin it on spinning wheels. The spun fiber is then used on a weaving loom to create a shawl. The finished shawls are auctioned to raise money for charity. Thousands of people attend this event each year.

References:

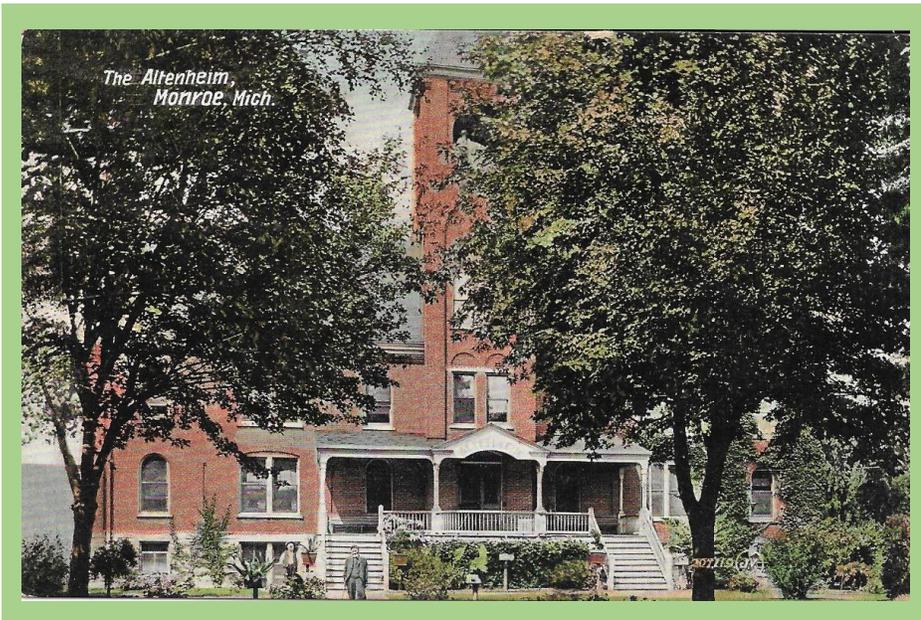
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<https://www.mysticstamp.com/1423-1971-6c-americas-wool-industry/>

<https://iwto.org/wool-supply-chain/history-of-wool/>

The Altenheim of Monroe

Michael Swope



The Altenheim of Monroe was a quiet corner of Michigan’s German-American past. In the late 19th century, when Monroe’s German-American community was thriving along the South Monroe corridor, one institution stood as a testament to the values of mutual aid and cultural solidarity: Altenheim, literally “the home for the aged.” Long before Social Security or modern eldercare, ethnic communities often built

their own benevolent homes to care for older members who had no family nearby or who simply needed a safe, dignified place to live. Monroe’s German residents followed this tradition with characteristic dedication. The Altenheim was more than a residence. It was a cultural anchor—supported by local German societies, Lutheran congregations, and community fundraising—that offered companionship, stability, and a sense of belonging to its residents. The sturdy brick building with the modest institutional architecture typical of the era and its symmetrical façade and landscaped grounds conveyed the community’s pride in providing a respectable home for its elders.

The only remaining remnant of the Altenheim today is its small cemetery, tucked behind the Monroe Shopping Center in the 900 block of South Monroe Street. For local historians and collectors, the Altenheim offers a fascinating glimpse into the social fabric of Monroe at the turn of the century. It reminds us that behind every postmark and postcard lies a community, its people, its institutions, and its stories. The Altenheim’s story is one of care, continuity, and the enduring strength of cultural identity in Michigan’s history.

Shown above is a Valentine & Sons’ Publishing Company (New York), post card, bearing the 1¢, green Franklin postage stamp, Scott #581. It was cancelled at Monroe on August 24, 1929.

*Ref: Post Card from Author’s collection
Wikipedia.com*

