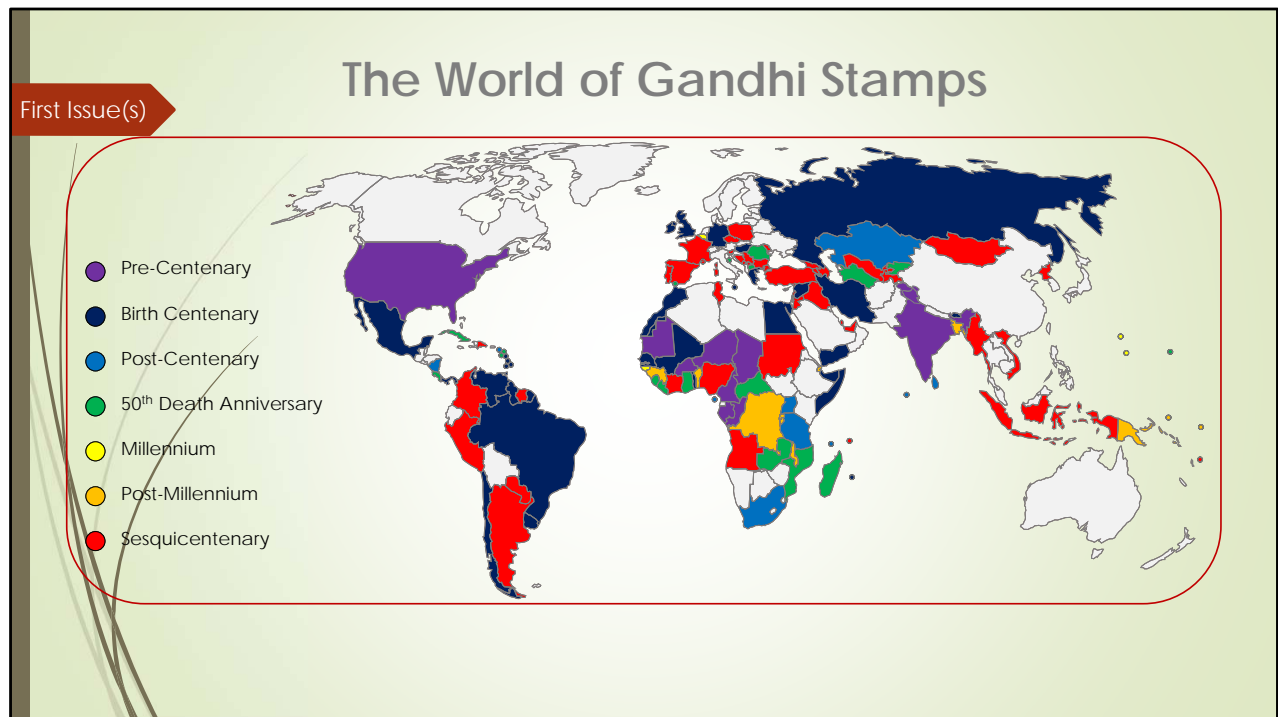


This is my 30th year exhibiting on Gandhi, and I want to share my experiences and how they have shaped my exhibits through the years.



No journey can begin without a map, so let us start with this one that I prepared, after the sesquicentennial celebrations in 2019 just updated.

1. Starting with the first anniversary of Indian independence in 1948, countries that followed included the US (1961 Champion of Liberty series) and 7 West and Central African nations (Apostle of Peace / Non-violence series).
2. Over 20 countries celebrated Gandhi's birth centenary with commemorative stamps and five others (Burma, Cambodia, Czechoslovakia, Fiji, and Luxembourg) issued commemorative cancellations without associated stamps.
3. Another 20 countries issued commemorative Gandhi stamps between his birth centenary and the 50th anniversary of his death.
4. Over 30 new issues of Gandhi stamps were associated

with the 50th anniversary of his death and the end of the millennium / century.

5. Between the Millennium and the sesquicentennial, countries that issued their first Gandhi stamps include Bangladesh and the Pacific Islands of Micronesia, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu.
6. Over forty additional countries issued their first Gandhi stamps to commemorate his sesquicentennial.
7. A few more Gandhi stamps were issued on the 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence this year, but no new countries.

While only a handful of countries issued stamps featuring Gandhi before the Centennial (1969), that number has grown to so many by 2020 that it is easier to identify the countries that have not.



Lot at a collage of early stamps issued featuring Gandhi, like this one I prepared in 2010 as a poster for the Gandhi Museum in Delhi to sell and raise funds.

Few are related to specific events (like getting thrown out of the train in Pietermaritzburg in 1893 or the Salt March in 1930).

Most are solo portraits- or mug shots- not even featuring others like Mountbatten or Martin Luther King. The few you see here came in the late 1990s.



1977

Round 0

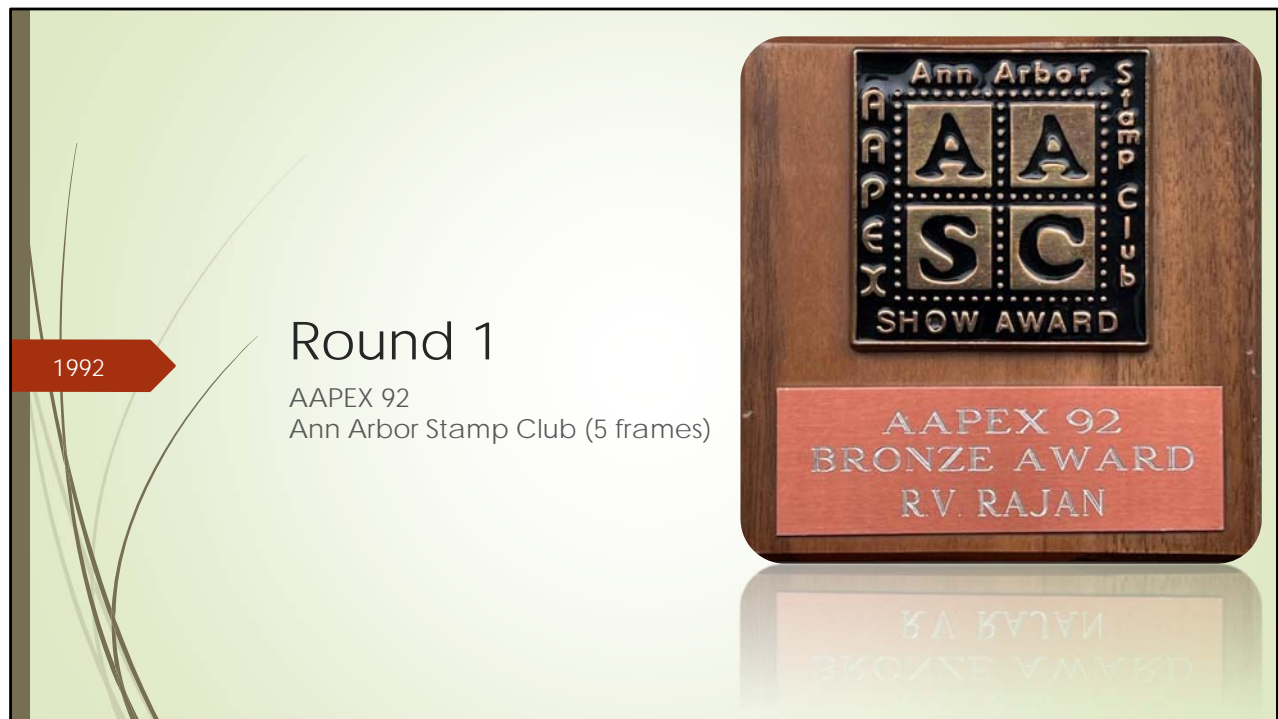
INPEX 77
Bangalore, India (1 frame)

My first philatelic exhibit was at INPEX 77 in Bangalore, India. India's third National Philatelic Exhibition.

I was in High School.

It was titled "The Sun Did Set in the British Empire" and included last colonial and first post-independence stamps of many countries.

And maps. Many maps.

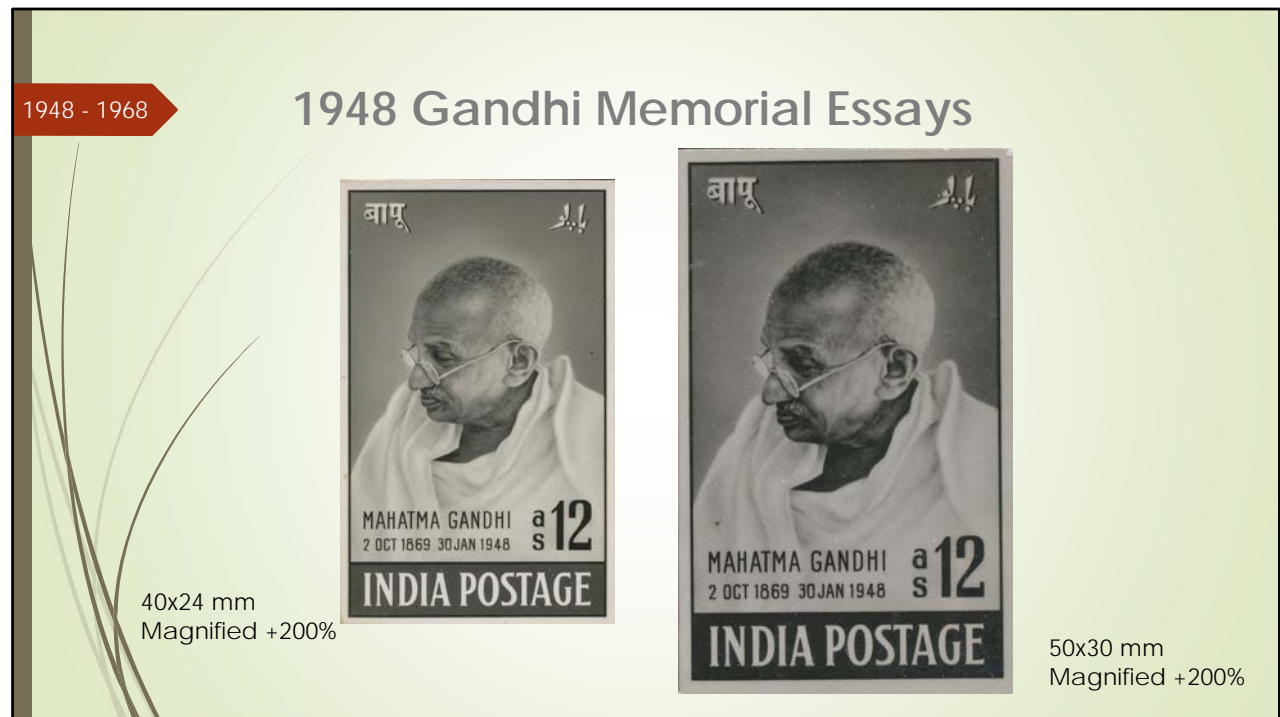


My first Gandhi exhibit was 15 years later, half way across the world.

Right after I finished Grad School in Massachusetts and moved to Michigan.

I will walk you through quick about what prompted me to do this exhibit and later ones.

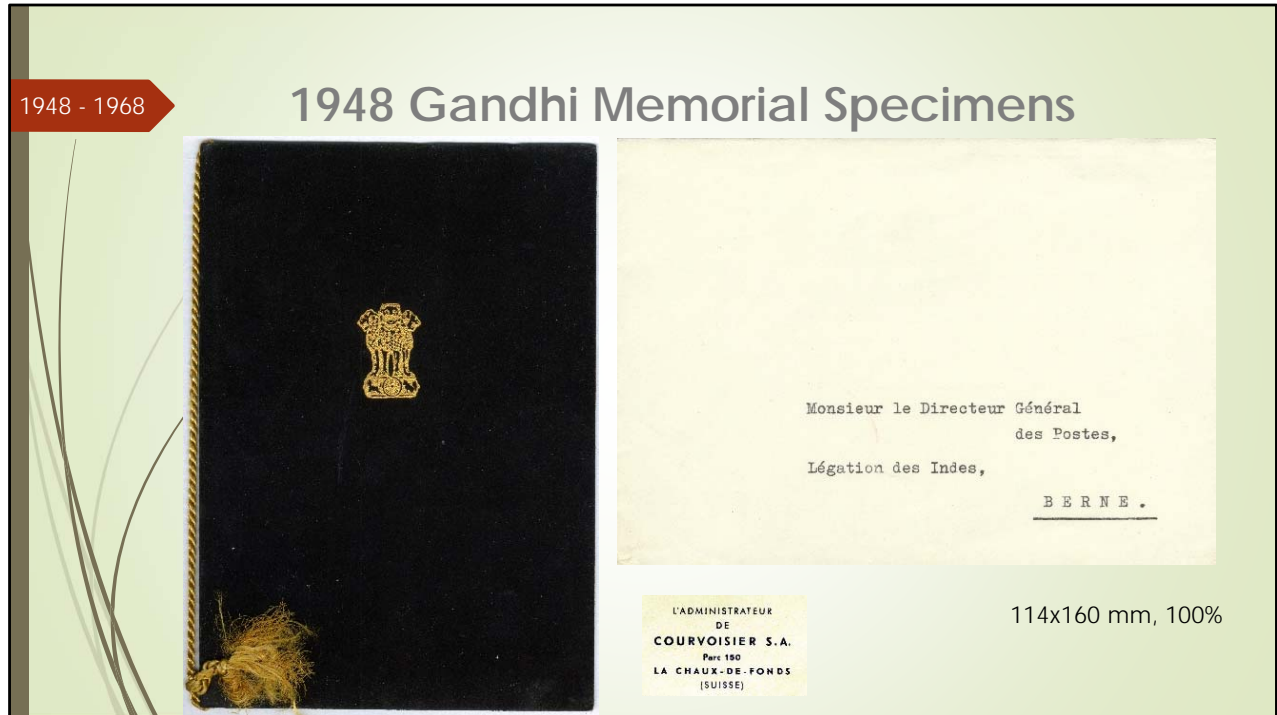
And key jury comments that have implications on what we exhibit and how.



Around 1990, while I was in Grad School in New England, I happened upon a philatelic lot in an estate auction in New Hampshire.

The old lady who passed away had lived in India in the 1940s and had connections to the Nehru family and New Delhi.

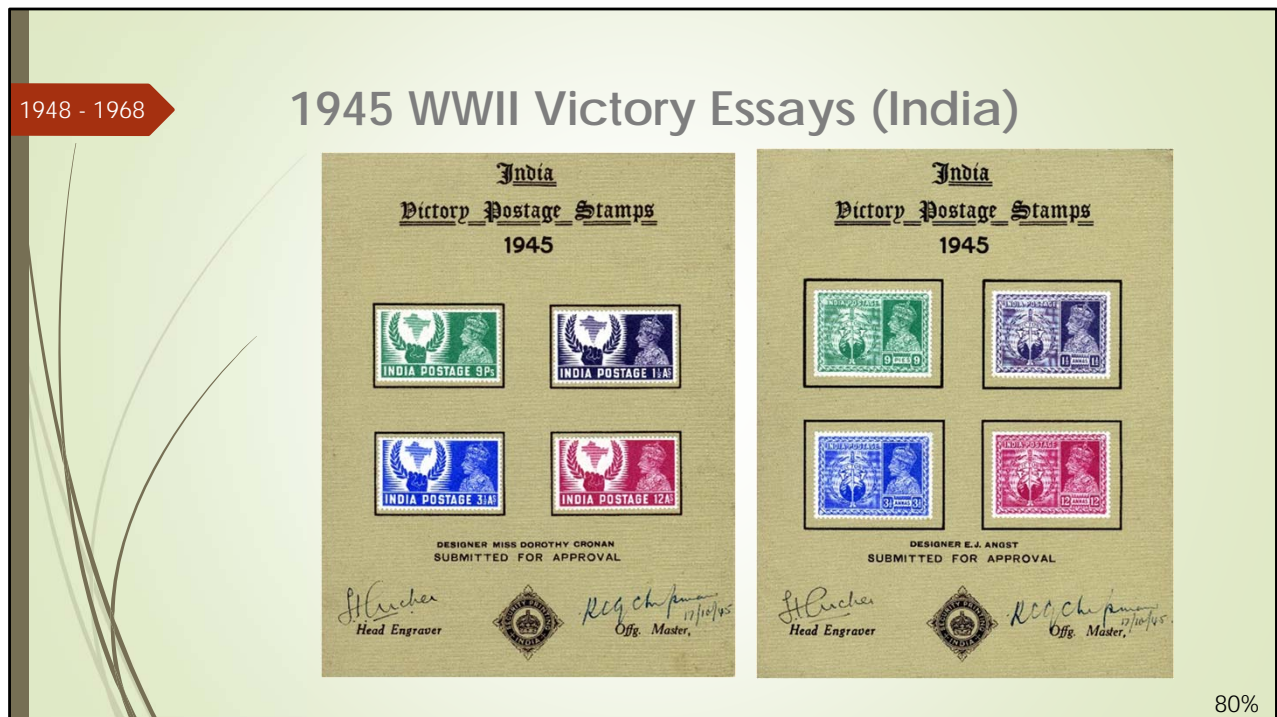
Part of that large lot included items that belonged to Krishna Prasad, the first Indian Postmaster General of Independent India. Including these essays of the 1948 Gandhi issue never seen before.



And there was a cover addressed to him from the Swiss Printers, with a folder containing all four SPECIMEN overprinted stamps.

Again “rumored to have existed”, as stated in an APS article by T.N. Mehta, but never seen before.

Subsequently, over a dozen have surfaced.



And there were these essays submitted for approval, signed by the Head Engraver and Officiating Master of the India Security Press.

Includes both the unadopted (left) and adopted (right) designs.

These are known to be unique at this stage of the design process, based on records available to the King George VI Philatelic Society.

Barely six weeks after the end of WWII, the process was underway for commemorative Victory philatelically.

Unlike most British colonies that issued the omnibus design, the “Victory” stamps printed in India had their own unique design.

The only Indian Nationalist to celebrate victory in WWII with the British were Jinnah and the Muslim League, who broke ranks with Gandhi to support the British War effort.

1948 - 1968

1948 and 1949 Slogan Cancels



And there were a few lovely covers with unseen slogan cancels.

Over five months had passed since the partition the two nations were still embroiled in gruesome civil wars. In an effort to influence the frenzied masses, 79-year old Gandhi started fasting on 13th January. To publicize and capitalize on the fast, there were propaganda slogans used by the Delhi and Calcutta Post Offices.

The English slogan reads "COMMUNAL HARMONY WILL SAVE GANDHIJI".

The Hindi slogan more emphatically states that "IT IS ONLY THROUGH COMMUNAL UNITY THAT GANDHIJI CAN SURVIVE".

I had to share these, along with the dozens of stamps of his bald head. It has been 30 years since my first Gandhi exhibit, but some of the comments I remember are-

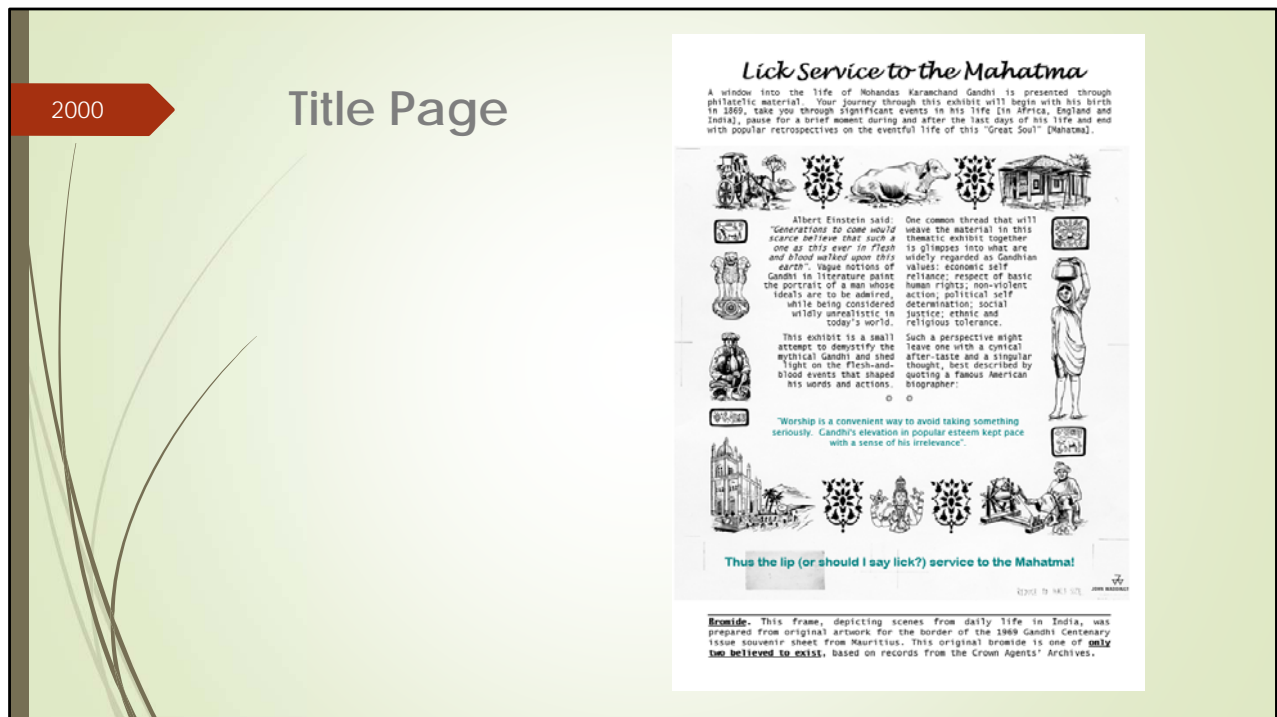
1. "You should not show multiple covers addressed to the same people."
2. "the WWII Victory Celebration Essays are an overreach"
3. You should get the 1948 Essays and Specimen overprints certified before exhibiting."
4. "This is Gandhi. There definitely must be more interesting stamps depicting his life- not just his face. You need to do better with stamps. You need more variety."



Fast forward 8 years, to 2000. I doubled the size of my exhibit to 10 frames and showed it in Buffalo.

In 1997 and 1998, I actually spent a lot of time petitioning the postal authorities in literally every country that had not issued a Gandhi stamp. Asking them to commemorate either the 50th anniversary of India's independence or remembering the 50th anniversary of his assassination. I specifically asked for some variety in what was depicted in the stamps. I got dozens of replies- some nice, some nasty! The Indian High Commissioner to Uganda wrote back and said that it was my letter that triggered the process for Uganda's 1997 and 1998 issues. I got a letter from Gambia that as a common man, I had no standing to make such a request- it was a breach of protocol. Israel sent a somber note that Gandhi's response to WWII has to be examined seriously.

Meanwhile, I also got my hands on interesting archival material when the Format Security Printers sold them at auctions.



Here's one that went in the title page. A bromide of the frame for the souvenir sheet from the 1969 Mauritius issue.

The exhibit title was tongue in cheek. I contrasted the track record of issuing countries with Gandhian ideas and ideals throughout my exhibit. Particularly modern India.



The lot included printer's archive proofs of the entire set of stamps, one set with approval signatures and stamp, another without. Along with this cover note from the Crown Agents Stamp Bureau, who produced Mauritius stamps back then.

1969-1972

1969 Mauritius Approved Designs



Bromides depict souvenir sheet reduced to half size, as noted.
Souvenir sheet bromide image further reduced to 60% here.
Approval and signature on the back of stamp bromides shown at 100%.

This was the souvenir sheet frame that I used in the front of my exhibit and in 2020 and still do.



And these bromides of stamps covered various stages of Gandhi's life and form the backbone of my exhibit even today.

1. Law Student in London
2. Stretcher bearer in the Zulu Rebellion
3. Satyagrahi in Durban
4. Indentured Labor Activist when he visited Mauritius.
5. Outside 10 Downing Street during the Second Indian Roundtable Conference
6. The ubiquitous smiling portrait based on a picture taken in New Delhi in 1946

1969-1972

1969 Mauritius Approved Designs



Bromides depict souvenir sheet reduced to half size, as noted.
 Souvenir sheet bromide images further reduced to 60% here.
 Actual souvenir sheet image reduced to 80%.

And the bromide of the souvenir sheet itself was the back end of my exhibit in 2000 and continues to this day.

1915

WWI- FPO and IEF Material



Besides the Boer War and Zulu Rebellion, I also expanded on Gandhi's role in WWI.

Gandhi was in England when WWI broke out. He gathered Indians in England and Ireland, many his colleagues from South Africa.

He insisted on Indians in England "doing their bit" for the war, an idea objected to by many others.

He assembled a class of 80 volunteers who trained for first aid.

Early usage of cover mailed from FPO No. 8 [Indian Forces in Merville France, as part of the Western Front] on 29 Aug 1915. Of the 70,000 who served in France, over 5,500 were killed.

Besides the Western Front, the Indian Army of 10 divisions served in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, East Africa and Gallipoli.

A quarter of the forces were infantry and cavalry and almost all artillery personnel were British [the official policy from 1857 to 1935!].

Cover mailed to England from Indian Forces serving in North Africa during WWI. The Indian Expeditionary Force was serving in Egypt. Overprinted stamps were used for regular mail. This was the uncommon "official" mail on active service. Note CS Office backstamp.

1944

WWII- Protesting Foreign Forces in India



And on Gandhi's role in WWII.

All had changed in WWII. Tired of British intransigence on self-rule for India, he decided not to cooperate with "their war".

He particularly opposed the presence of foreign allied troops in Indian soil, American, Canadian, Australian, Chinese and others.

1948

Rates, Routes, Destinations..



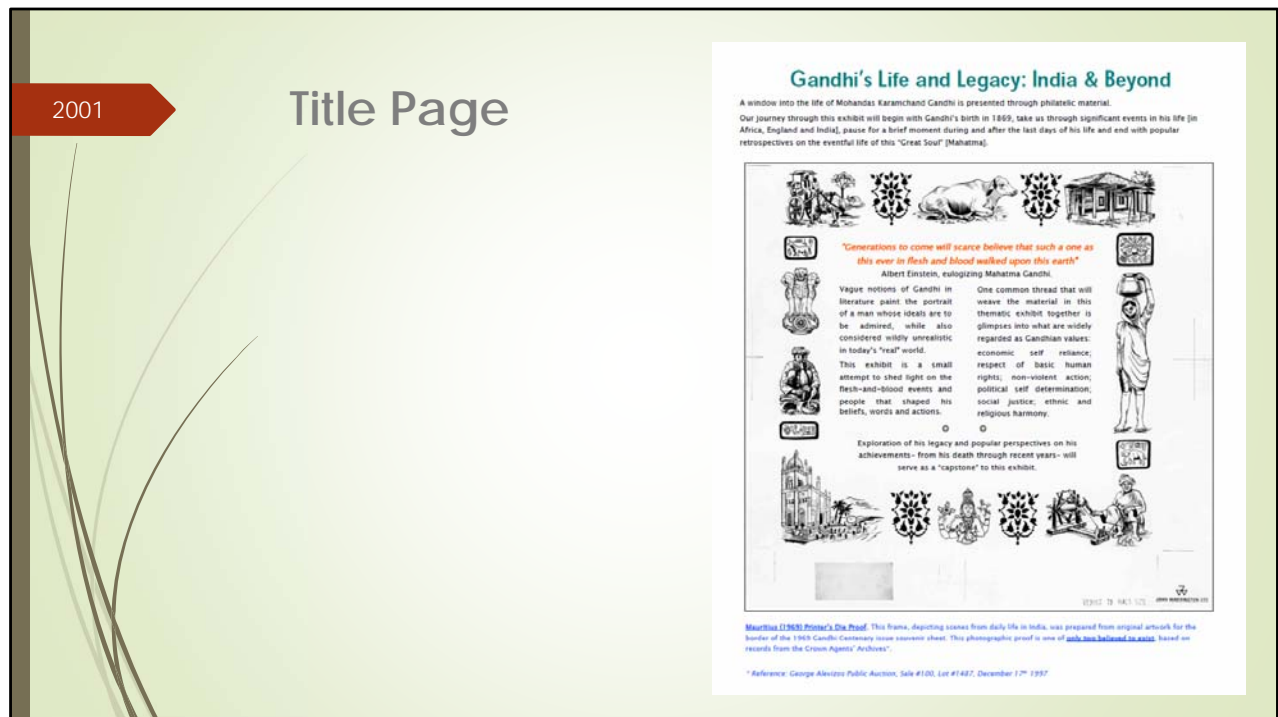
And I included an extended study of usage of the 1948 memorial issue. Multiple frames. Including several examples of the entire set mailed with various first day cancellations.

The jury chided me on-

1. Too flippant an exhibit title for a serious subject
2. "overuse of archival material"
3. "thematic overreach with use of collateral material related to the Boer War, WWI, and WWII"
4. "over-extended 1948 usage display"
5. And again "not enough variety of subjects in stamps shown"



I shrank my exhibit back two years later, mostly by reducing the tangential material and 1948 usage.



I also toned down on the exhibit title, while using the same material on the title page.

Pictorial Cancels

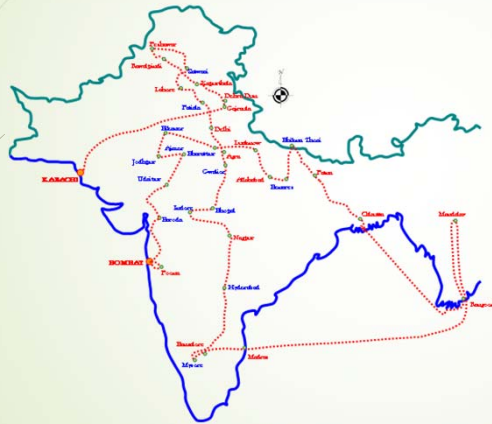


While there is a cottage industry of special pictorial cancels related to Gandhi from every corner of India, I caved in and used a few of these.

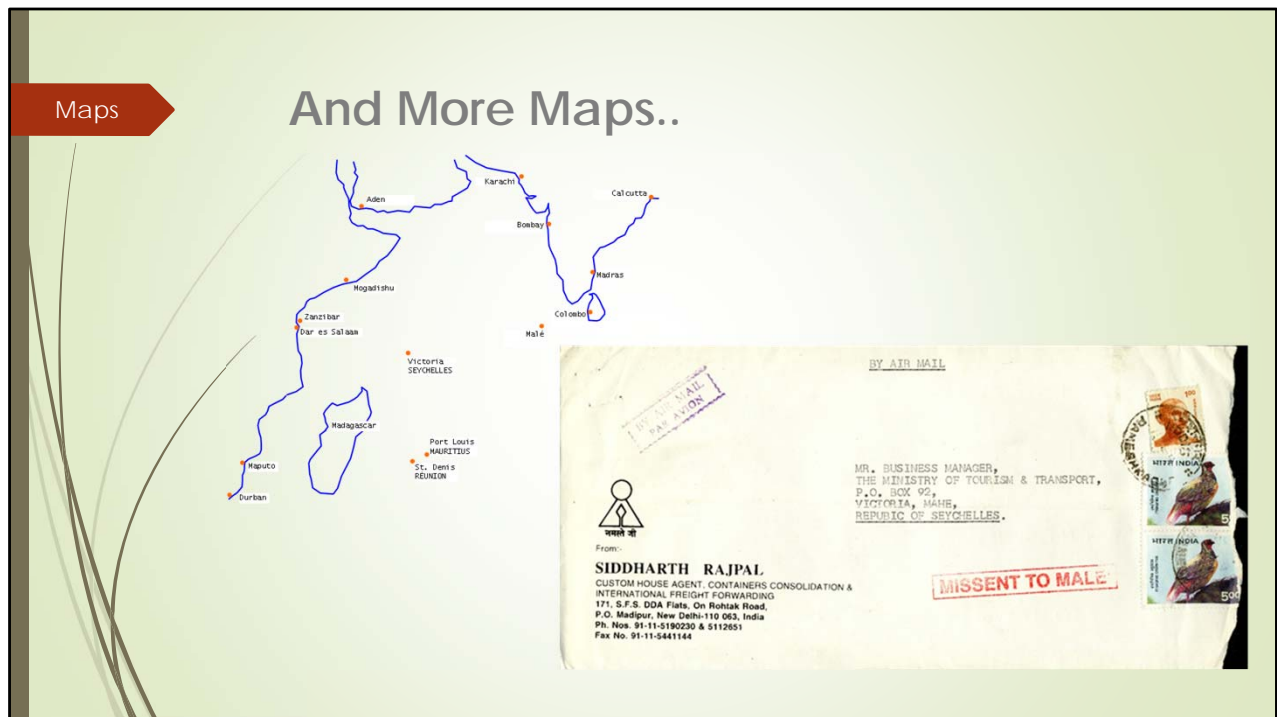
The Boer War.

Maps

Expanding on Tangents- Protests



Boycott of the 1922 Prince of Wales Royal Visit.



Even Gandhi's back and forth travel between Bombay and Durban.

Between 1893 and 1914, Gandhi traveled by sea several times between India and Africa.

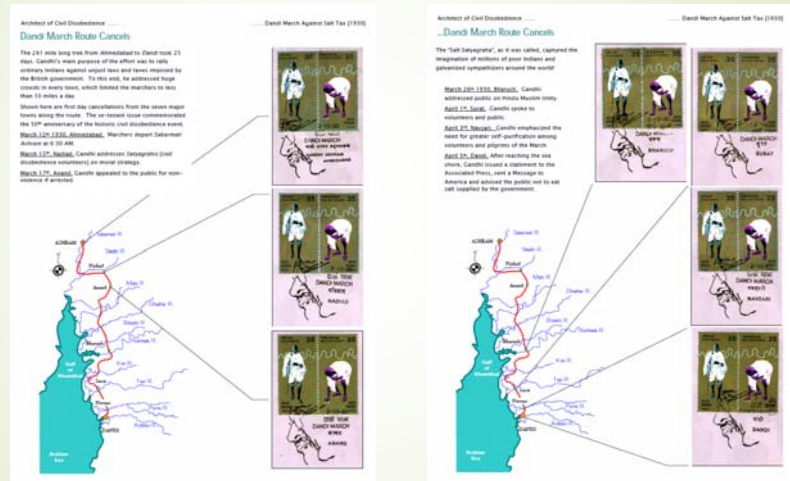
The seas in this part of the world were frequented by Arab and Indian merchants long before the Europeans "discovered" the east.

Famous "Ports of Call" in this region are shown in this map.

In many ways, while the world has apparently "grown smaller", it appears more geographically ignorant than it was in Gandhi's early days.

Maps

Dandi March Route Cancels



50%

And the 1930 Salt March. This map layout became quite popular with exhibitors from India. Some literally did a screenshot of my map and used it as-is in their exhibits (without credit). I share PDFs of all my exhibits online through my hobby website. I know imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but this was an extreme form of imitation!

The jury chided me for-

"too many maps"

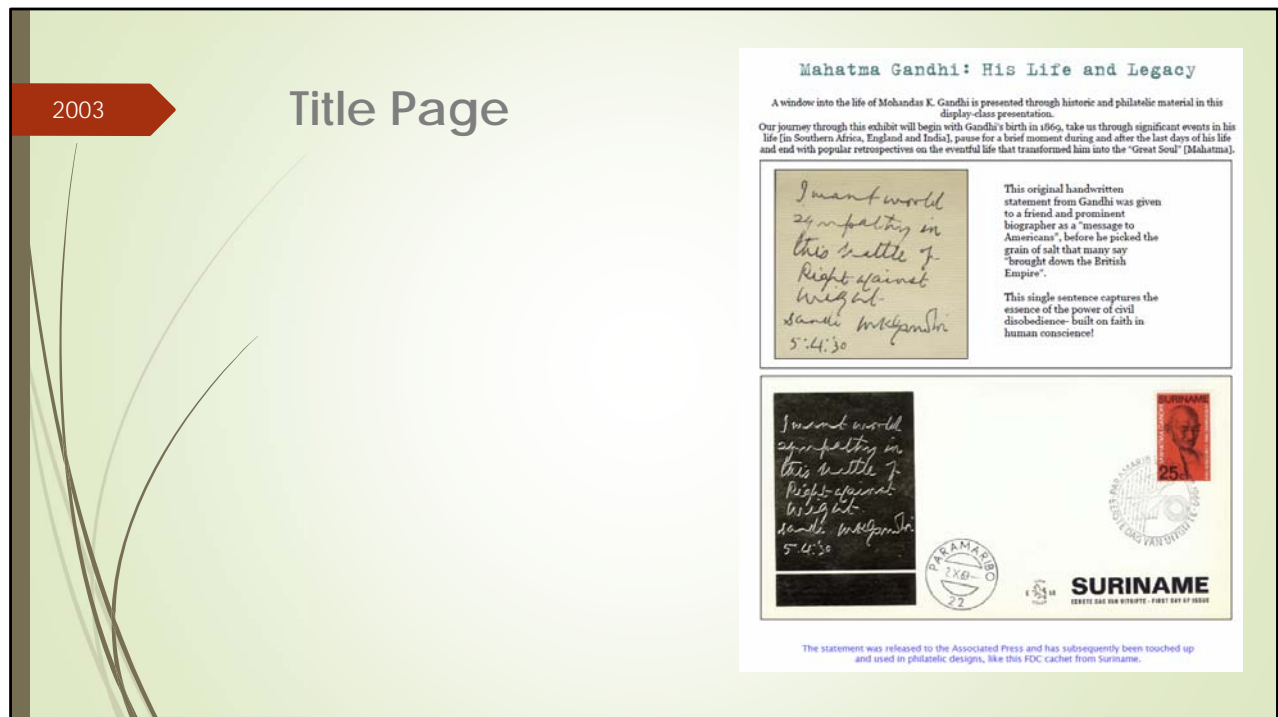
"too many first day cancels"

I entered it as a thematic exhibit, but the jury reclassified it as a Display Class exhibit. And they told me that the reclassification moved it from a Silver to a Vermeil!



Two years later, I decided to jump into the concept of Display Class formally.

This allowed me to show some non-philatelic material. And use some interesting archival material of cinderellas that covered subjects not well covered by legitimate postal issues.



My big find between 2000 and 2003 was this note from Gandhi at an autograph auction. So I featured it on the title page.

The jury chided me for using a cachet First Day Cover on the title page, along with non-philatelic material!

India (5 Apr 1930). This original handwritten statement from Gandhi was given to a friend and prominent biographer as a "message to Americans", before he picked the grain of salt that many say "brought down the British Empire". This single sentence captures the essence of the power of civil disobedience- built on faith in human conscience! The statement shown above was released by Gandhi to the Associated Press and has subsequently been touched up and used in philatelic designs.

Medals

Non-Philatelic Material- Boer War



50%

And I used actual war medals and lovely watercolor essays of cinderella issues.

Medals

Zulu Rebellion & WWI



50%

I particularly expanded on the Kaiser-i-Hind medal awarded to Gandhi in 1918, which he returned in 1920, after the 1919 Jallianwalabagh massacre.

Probably the most controversial subject on Gandhi and Wars was his participation in the Imperial War Conference in Delhi [invited by the Viceroy] in 1918. He left Delhi and initiated a call for volunteers.

This was different from all else, he was recruiting COMBATANTS, not an ambulance Corps. The moral dilemma was probably taxing, as his pacifist ideals had begun to congeal. He got very sick towards the end of his drive, as he did while he was recruiting in London in 1914.

Indian forces numbered about 155,000 in 1914. By November 1918, the Army had swelled to 573,000. Over

1.3 million Indians served in WWI and about 72,000 were killed in combat.

The Jury told me that my writeup was “too political”.

2001

Commercially Used Covers



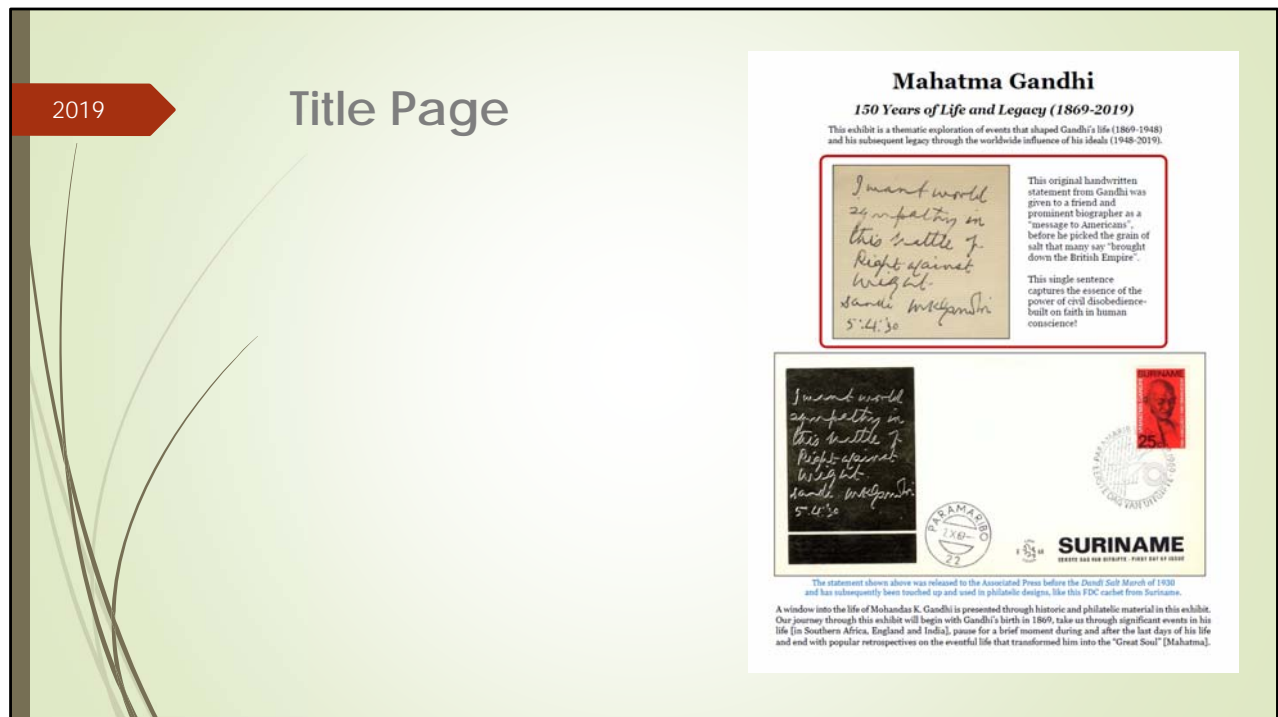
Since there were no stamps yet showing Gandhi with Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. or Charlie Chaplin, I used covers mailed back to me, but did not window out my address.

I was promptly chided for displaying too many commercially used covers that were addressed to me, which they rightfully called “manufactured philatelic material”, although with legitimate rates for usage.



I took a 16 year hiatus from philatelic exhibiting, raising two kids and putting them through college. When the younger one graduated and got a job, I went back to my hobby.

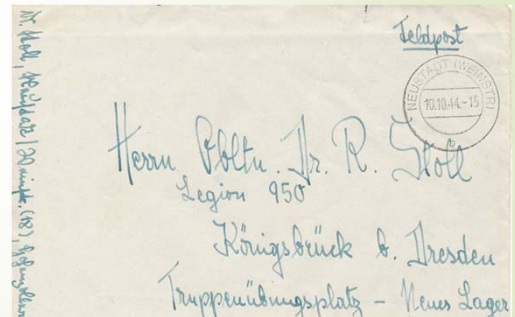
And the flood of new material related to Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary was a good motivator.



I still used the same material in my title page- the autographed note from 1930.

1943-44

Indian Legion



I introduced new postal history material from the Indian Legion in Europe during WWII. In the context of Bose aligning with the Nazis and Gandhi's vocal opposition to that strategy.

1943-44

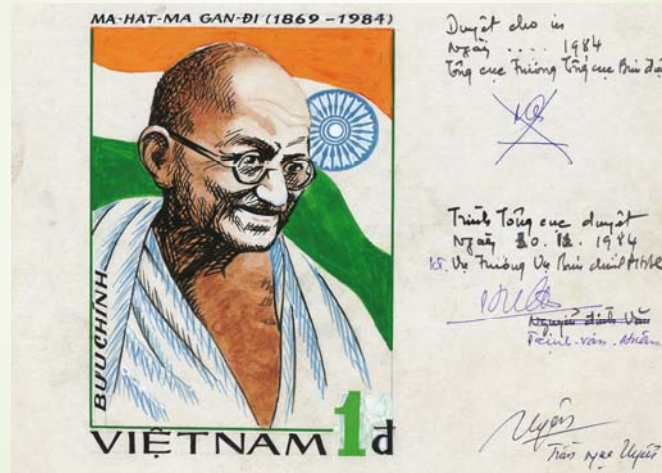
Indian National Army



I also introduced new postal history material from the Indian National Army in the Malay Peninsula during WWII. Again, in the context of Bose aligning with the Japanese and Gandhi's vocal opposition to that strategy.

1972-1997

1984 Vietnam Unadopted Design



198x234 mm
Reduced to 80%

And there was some lovely unique essays from Vietnam that were worth sharing..

1972-1997

1987 Vietnam Unadopted Design



230x168 mm
Reduced to 60%

Particularly in the context of Indira Gandhi being confused as Mahatma Gandhi's relative.

1972-1997

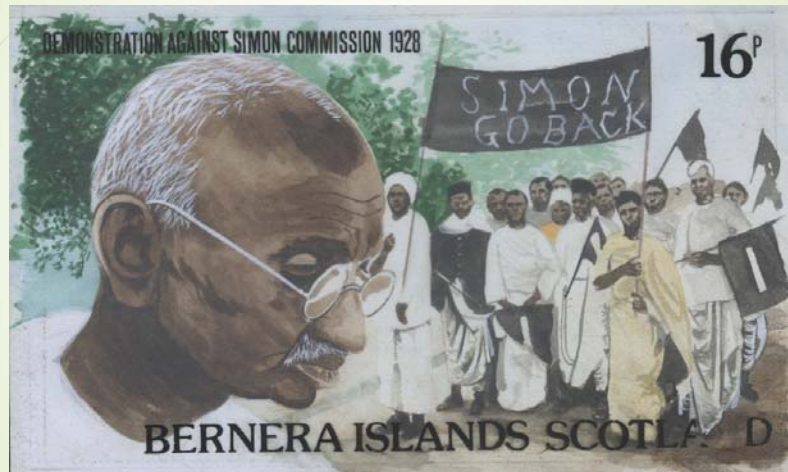
1987 Vietnam Unadopted Design



232x189 mm
Reduced to 80%

1969-1972

1969 Scottish Local Cinderella

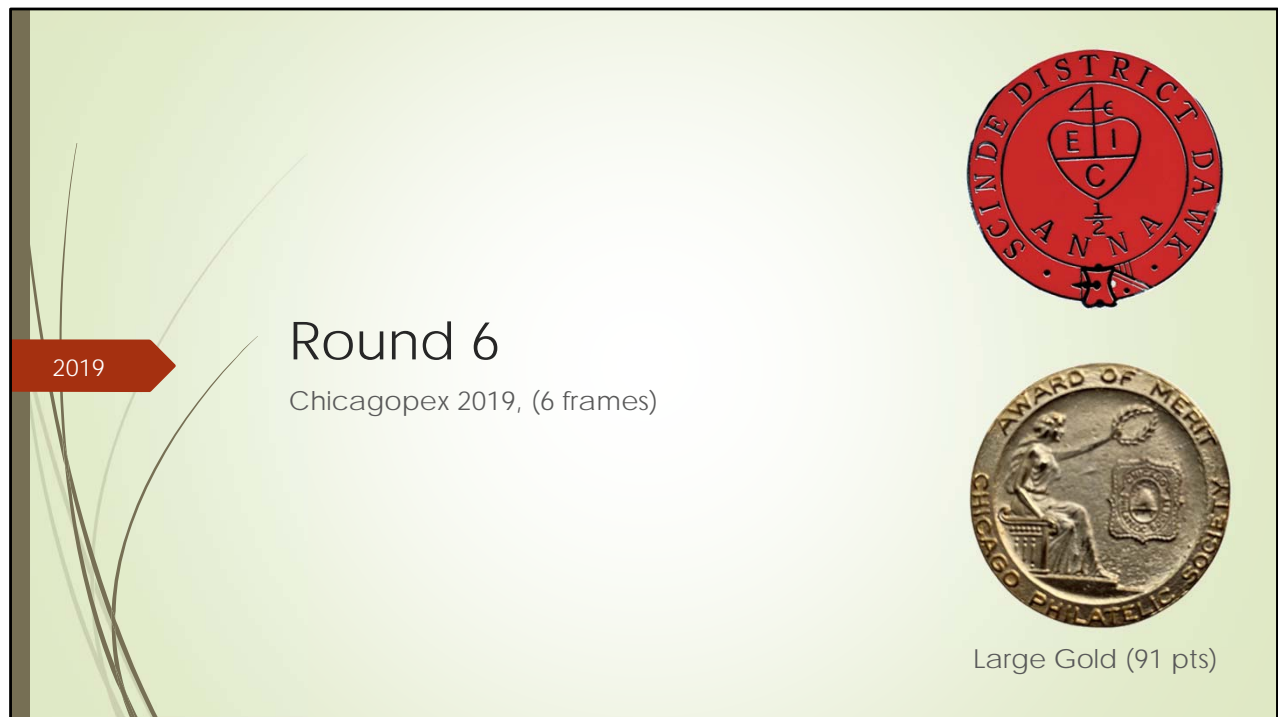


107x173 mm
Magnified +20%

And I continued to use archival material from cinderella issues when there was no legitimate philatelic alternative. Like this 1928 Simon Commission boycott that Gandhi was instrumental in organizing.

This was entered as a thematic exhibit, judged as one, and feedback was good.

The biggest jury comment was “how can you bury the philatelic gems of Modern India- the SPECIMEN and SERVICE overprinted 1948 sets – deep into the exhibit? They belong in the title page”. They were unanimous about this.



Which prompted me to revise the exhibit, add a frame and change the title page, to do another exhibit a month later in Chicago.

Title Page

Mahatma Gandhi

150 Years of Life and Legacy [1869-2019]

This exhibit is a thematic exploration of events that shaped Gandhi's life [1869-1948] and the subsequent legacy that followed him, through the worldwide influence of his ideals [1948-2019].



India [1948] 10Rs. Series inaugurated 10 Rs stamp. The highest valued post stamp from India thus far. Other three lower values (denominations) in this exhibit. [10Rs. 1948/1949](#), [10Rs. 1949/1950](#), [10Rs. 1950/1951](#) are also available in the collection. [10Rs. 1951/1952](#) is also available in the collection.

India [1948] 10Rs. (denomination) in series (1948 and 1949) of two color design considered by the 10Rs value and later adopted only for the 10 Rs value. [10Rs. 1948/1949](#).

India [1948] 10Rs. (denomination) stamp. Joint issue India and Pakistan addressed to the Indian LPU (Landed in India). Remaining other three later in the exhibit. [10Rs. 1948/1949](#) is also available in the collection. [10Rs. 1949/1950](#) is also available in the collection.

Gandhi was remembered with a memorial issue on the first anniversary of independence. This stamp issue represents the image of the movement between him Gandhi and how he was later remembered. The issue on his 100th anniversary, the stamp designers called imaginary thinking to the portrait that looks quite artificial in the 10Rs design shown above. The set included the [most expensive 10Rs. value for a commemorative stamp from India](#) (10Rs. 1948) to honor a man who only used post office. Few if any in India would afford the high value stamp in the set, which had no legitimate postal use to be used for.

These were the first Indian commemorative printed in [India](#) (1948) to honor the leader who promoted domestic industries. To add to the unique value for this stamp, the Governor General of India authorized the [first official use of Indian commemorative with a WORK](#) (1948) for a limited time, with 10 Rs value sold for a purpose to collectors, to value India. Besides further with tradition, the printed [10Rs. 1948/1949](#) stamp to the Indian LPU (Landed in India) and to other LPU. Most of these [10Rs. 1948/1949](#) stamps were cancelled with the GOVERNOR GENERAL'S CANCEL (1948) postmark, but for a few with a [10Rs. 1948/1949](#) stamp.

mark the efforts of people and government were replaced by the new office of President of India later on 28 Jan 1950. Most copies of the Gandhi [10Rs. 1948/1949](#) stamp have the distinction of being the most expensive stamp from independent India (10Rs. 1948) to honor a man who only used post office. Few if any in India would afford the high value stamp in the set, which had no legitimate postal use to be used for.

A window into the life of Mohandas K. Gandhi is presented through historic and philatelic material in this exhibit. Our journey through this exhibit will begin with Gandhi's birth in 1869, take us through significant events in his life (in Northern Africa, England and India), pause for a brief moment during and after the last days of his life and end with popular retrospectives on the eventual life that transformed him into the "Great Soul" (Mahatma).

Exhibit Plan

In developing the storyline for a thematic exhibit, it is imperative that the exhibit plan and critical thematic narrative focus on the story being told. While the connection between the philatelic material presented in this exhibit and the story will be apparent in individual sections, the narrative here in the exhibit often obtains from getting into finer details of the philatelic elements, to avoid excessive distraction from the thematic storyline.

When the subject of a thematic exhibit is a personality, the natural order for an exhibit plan is expected to be chronological. The story line presented here is organized to explore specific elements of the Gandhi's life and legacy from two facets (1) events that shaped his life and ideals and (2) our historical perceptions of the same.

These events and perceptions are grouped into logical blocks and a semblance of chronological order has been maintained within each group, when deemed necessary to organize the story, as shown in the exhibit plan below.

Life (1869-1948)

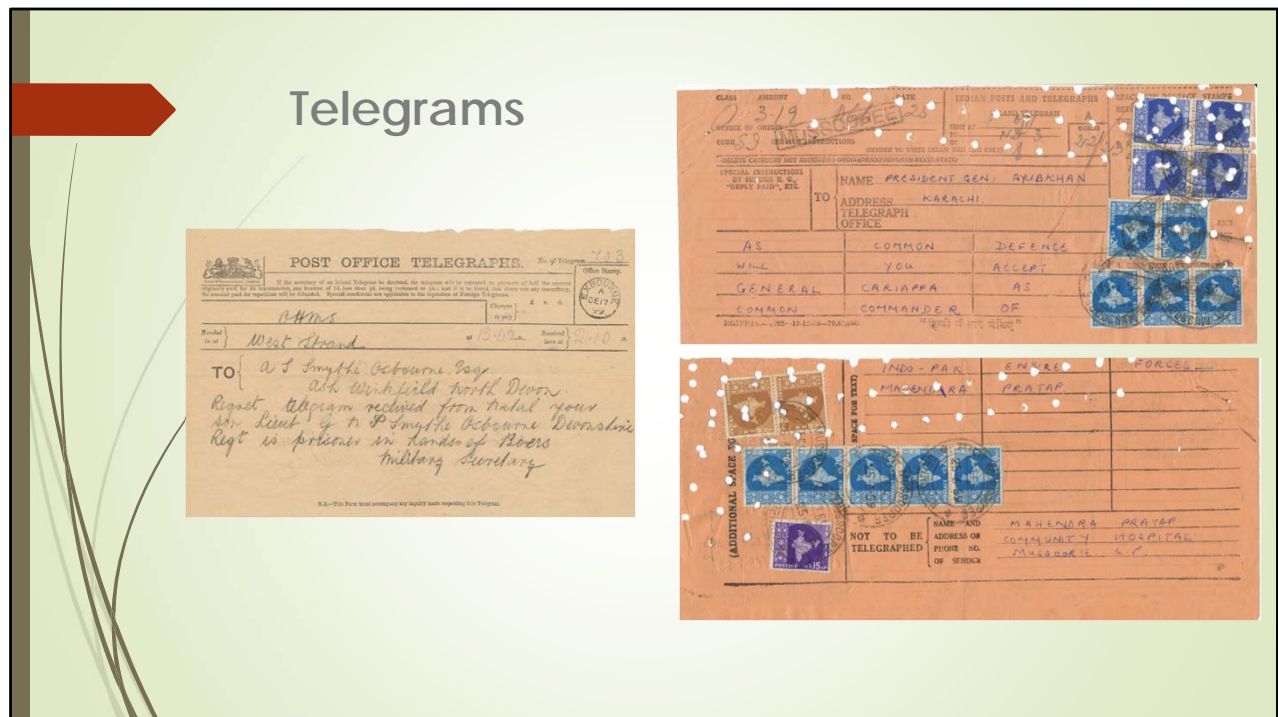
1. Early Years (1869-1901)
2. Legal Professional (1901-1902)
3. Participant in Wars (1904-1914)
4. Political Organization & Negotiation (1904-1922)
5. Architect of Civil Disobedience (1906-1931)
6. Social Experimentation (1906-1948)
7. The Final Days (1947-1948)

Legacy (1948-2019)

8. The Morning After: Memorialized in India
9. India After Gandhi
10. Lasting Inspiration
11. The Man is an Ideal
12. Inspiration and Legacy
13. The Service and More

[Total Number of Pages: 10](#)

Same title, but the 10 Rs overprints and 12 As essays made it to the title page.

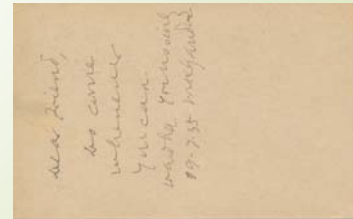
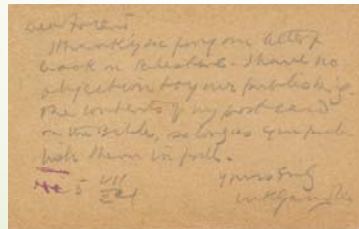


And I introduced another element- telegrams.

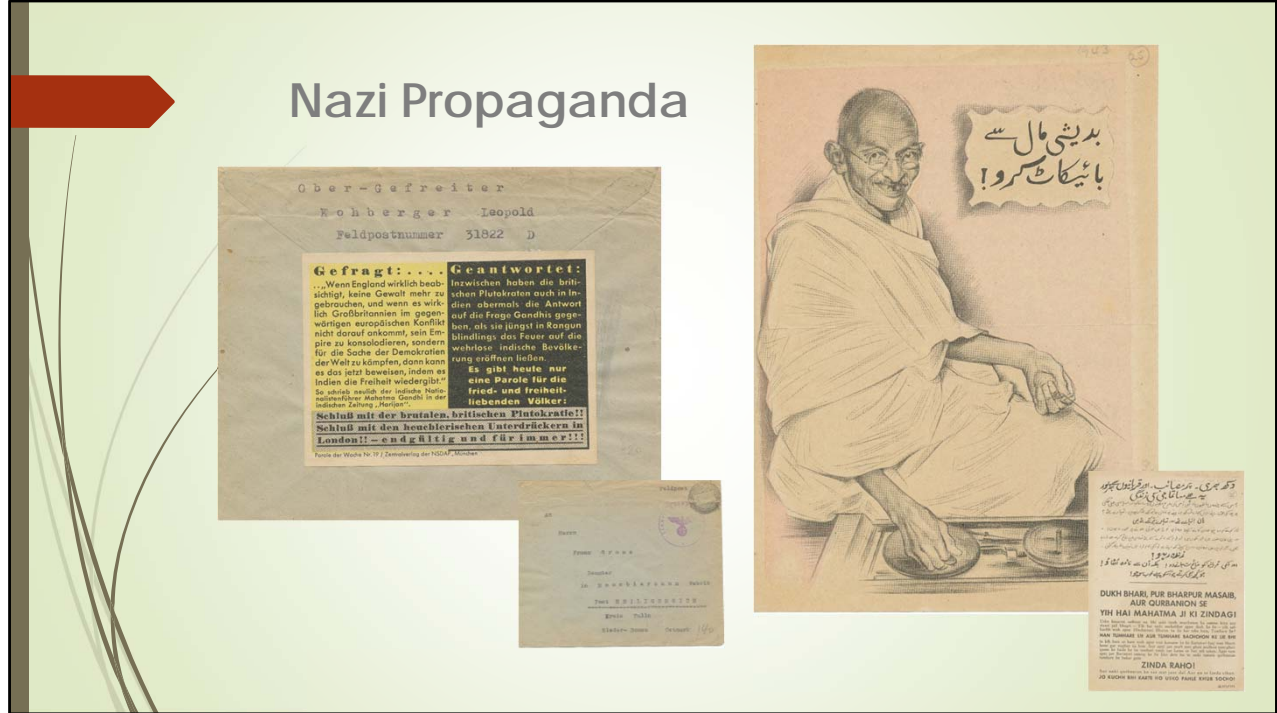
Natal (17 Dec 1899). Telegram, manuscript OHMS and Exbourne date stamp with message about Lt. Osbourne, who was captured by the Boers at Stormburg on 10th Dec 1899. Coincidentally, sent and received the first day of the first mobilization of Gandhi's Ambulance Corps. Possibly Unique.

India (25 Jun 1959). A fascinating telegram from one of Gandhi's associates in his final days from his hospital bed, pushing for Gandhi's dream of constructive engagement. Written from Mussoorie and addressed to General Ayub Khan, President and military ruler of Pakistan, urging him to create the INDO-PAK force under a joint command. He had suggested General K.M. Cariappa, first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. He was the first Indian military officer to attend the Staff College, Quetta (now Pakistan), the first Indian to command a battalion, and was also one of the first two Indians selected to undergo training at the Imperial Defense College, Camberley, UK. This remained a pipe dream and the two nuclear powers have been at war many times since: 1965, 1971 and 1999.

Postcards



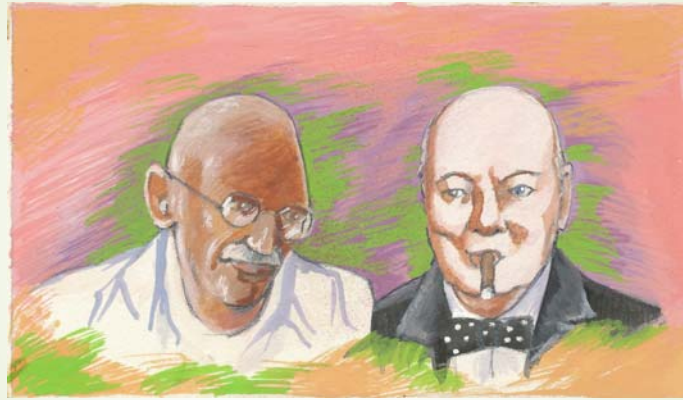
Also, by then, I had acquired several postcards written by Gandhi- from his Ashrams and from Prison.



And I added Nazi WWII propaganda that specifically called out Gandhi- one label and one air drop leaflet.

1972-1997

1974 Swedish Local Cinderella



85x147 mm
Magnified +25%



And a new watercolor cinderella essay with Churchill- as there was still no legitimate postal issue that tied Churchill to the “half-naked Fakir” who made him foam at his mouth whenever his name was mentioned.

Again, this was a thematic exhibit, judged as one under the 2016 APS guidelines.

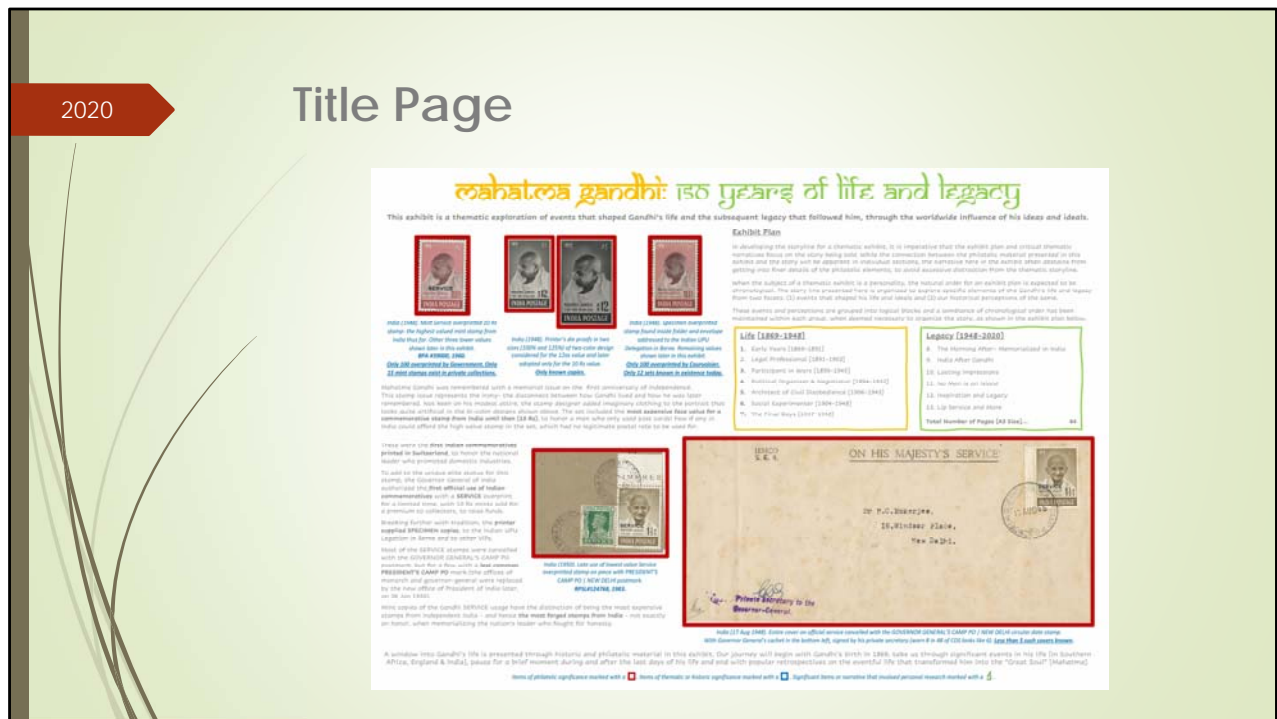
Just before the new 2019 Manual of Philatelic Judging was implemented, if I recall.



With the domestic Large Gold under my belt, I said yes when asked to show at the virtual FIP exhibition in India.

Based on some of the responses to Ben Ramkissoo's exhibit in India from a couple of decades earlier, I always hesitated exhibiting on the subject in India.

Nevertheless, I expanded my exhibit from 6 to 8 frames and displayed in India for the first time. And I dropped from a Large Gold (US) to a Large Vermeil (FIP).



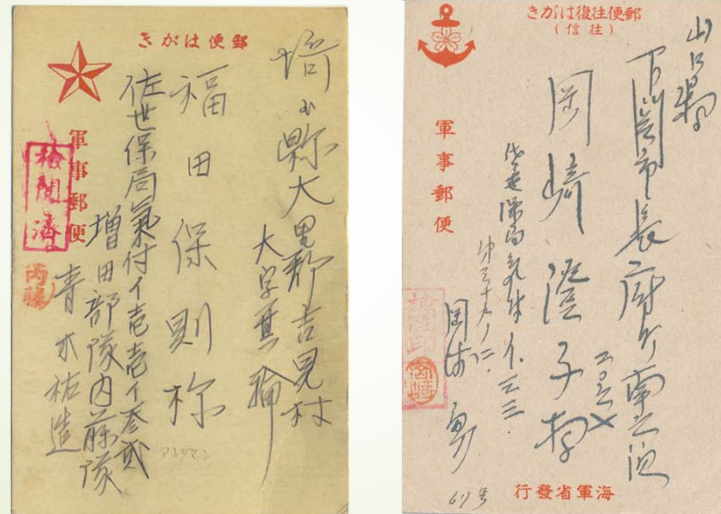
Interestingly, while the APS jury in Omaha asked me to move the SPECIMEN and SERVICE overprint high values to the title page, the jury in India chided me for that.

Saying "if it was Life and Legacy, you cannot start with stamps issued to memorialize his death!".

47



Japanese Occupation in India



And the materials I had shown earlier, to speak of Gandhi's reaction to Bose's support of the Japanese, did not go over well with the Indian jury either.

These postcards from the Japanese occupation of Andaman and Nicobar Islands (I showed two each), and the associated narrative were "too political", I was told.



Two other air-drop leaflets – these by allied forces – did not go over well either.

One depicted Bose as responsible for the death of Indian civilians (shown embracing a Japanese bomb).

Another was a joint Gandhi-Jinnah appeal for peace. My narrative was that while many consider Jinnah Gandhi's adversary, he considered Jinnah a friend and associate. That was bad politics in India, of course. As Jinnah was the founder of Pakistan.



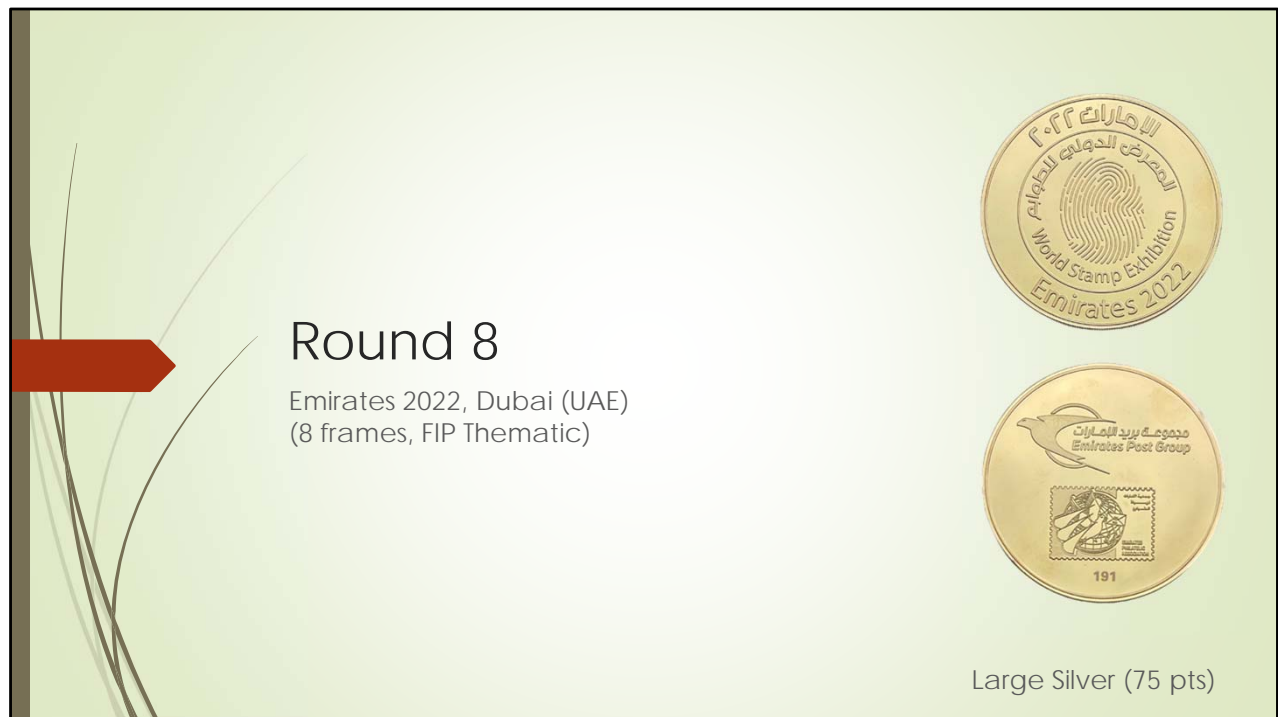
Lastly, the most common comment I got from collectors, commissioners, and jury from India was that I am showing too much material from African countries who issue too many stamps.

True, you can see this updated collage of recent issues and it is dominated by African countries.

The thematic reason is simple- what's shown on their stamps is more diverse and supports the story telling.

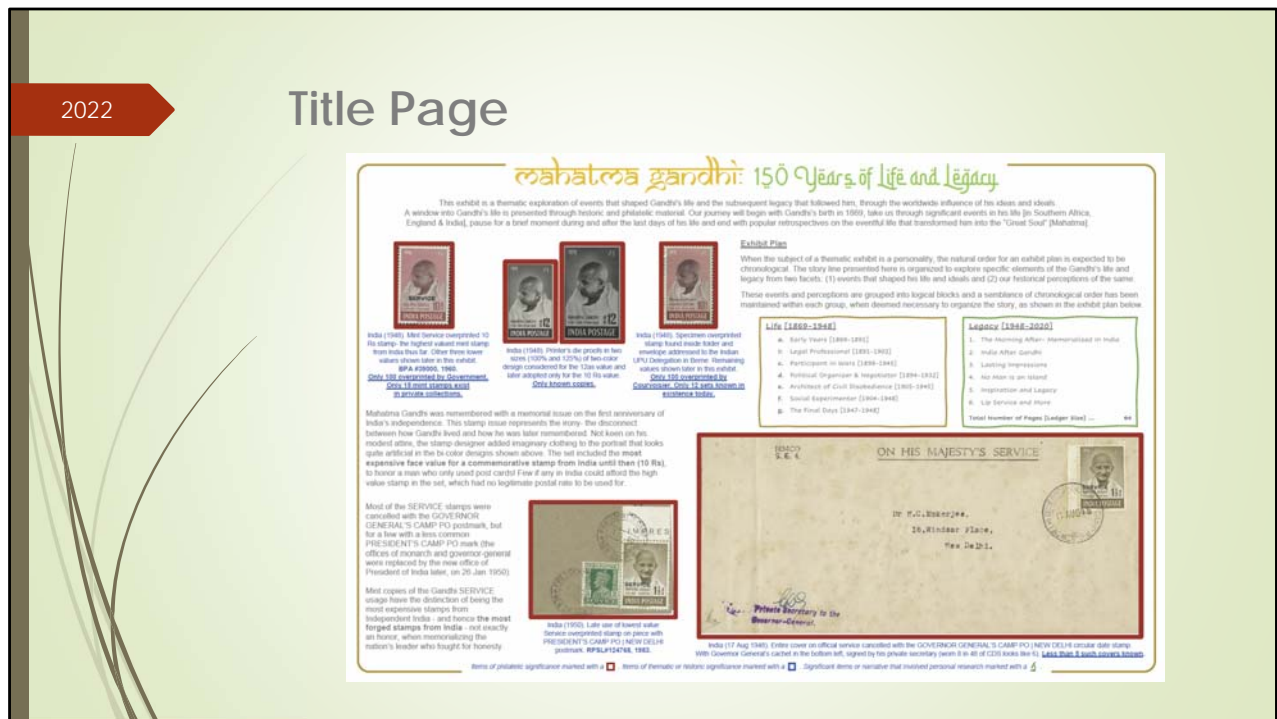
The historic reasoning is even simpler and is reflected in the new title of my exhibit shown here this week- Mohan to Mahatma.

Nelson Mandela said: "You gave us Mohandas Gandhi; we returned him to you as Mahatma Gandhi." Gandhi's transition from a run-of-the-mill business lawyer to a social activist happened in Africa. Not in India. If India can issue Gandhi stamps every year and pictorial cancels every week, so can any of these African countries, who might have a stronger claim to his legacy in some fashion.



Two years later, I tweaked the exhibit some, adding some new material and displayed another 8 frame exhibit in Dubai.

This show did not allow for an FIP Open Class Exhibit, so I had to show it as Thematic.



I had the same title page as I did at Chicagopex 2019 and PhilaVirtu 2020, except for the title font.

Dropped from Large Vermeil (85 points) to Large Silver (75 points).

A black box. No feedback from FIP jury. No breakdown of the points.

1946-48

Letters to Gandhi

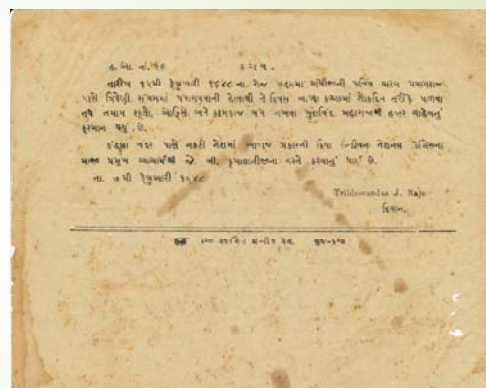


Two new items I showed are probably an FIP no-no for a thematic exhibit.

Two letters addressed to Gandhi. Both have enormous thematic relevance to Gandhi's last days in New Delhi. How he ended up in a renovated slum (Bhangi Colony) in 1946. How that became a refugee colony in 1947 and that's why he ended up in the house of a rich industrialist (Birla House, where he was killed).

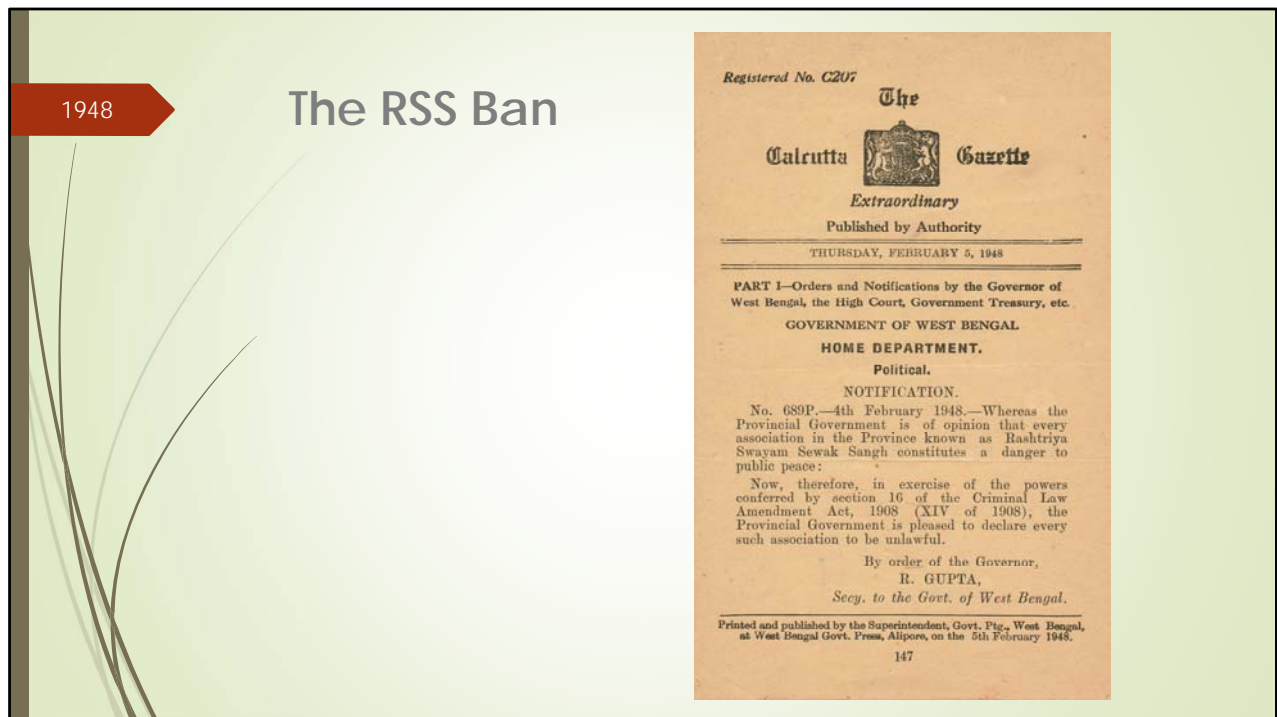
1948

Gandhi's Ashes



I have tweaked the Emirates FIP exhibit, removed all the cinderella material, and am showing it at this show.

I will close by showing two non-philatelic items I will add to my next exhibit. The first is this public notice about the scattering of his ashes near his place of birth.



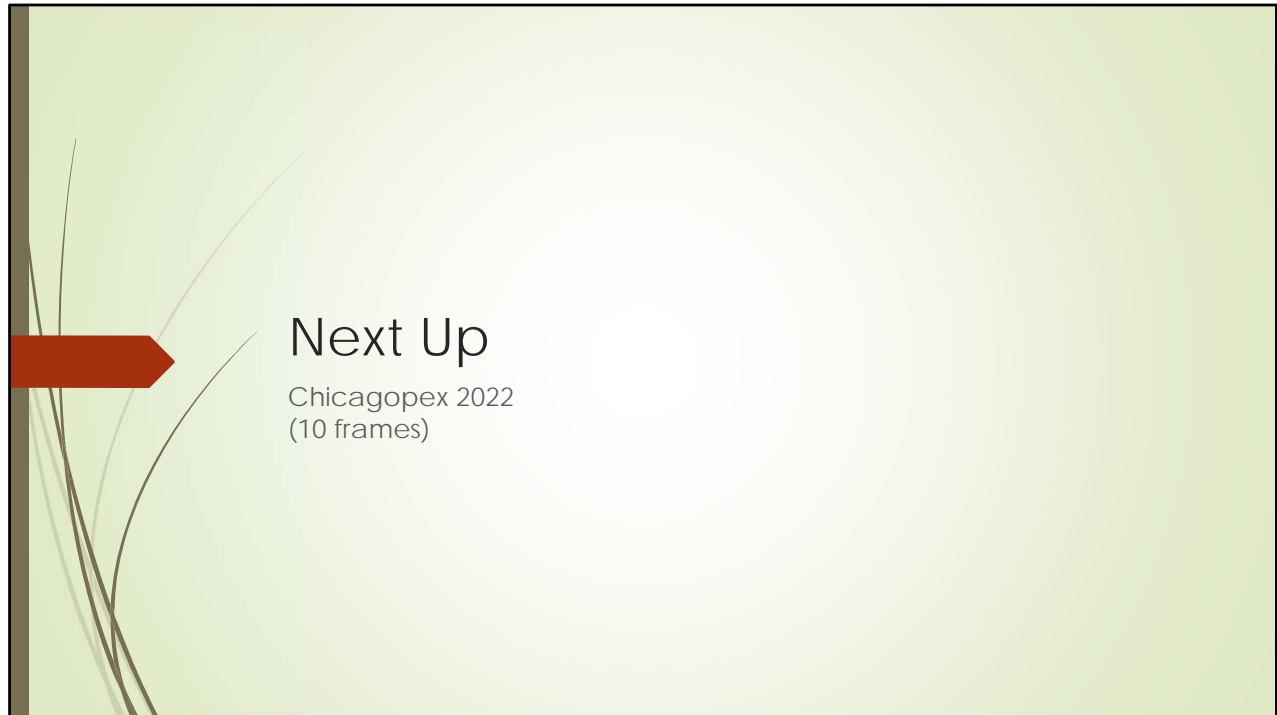
The other 1948 item I will show is this notice published in the Calcutta Gazette, about the RSS Ban instituted by then Home Minister Sardar Patel, less than a week after Gandhi's assassination.

Needless to say, this probably won't go over well, if I exhibited in India again.

The RSS is to BJP, the current party leading the Indian Government, what the IRA was to Shin Fein in Ireland.

You can't take politics out of the exhibit, if you can't take the politics out of the exhibitor or the subject of the exhibit!

Wherever the points or medals end up, I will continue to tell the story, using this medium.



I plan to expand this exhibit back to 10 frames over the next two months and show this in Chicago.

In memory of my mentor and friend, Dr. Reuben Ramkissoo (1929-2021).

Ben passed away on April 22, 2021 at 11:40 a.m. after a 21-year battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 91 years old.

He was descendant of indentured Indian laborers who migrated to Trinidad.

An amazing pathologist and philatelist, who I had the honor of meeting at the ATA show in 2000, right after his Parkinson's diagnosis.

I had an amazing time working with him on the Philatelic Handbook of Gandhi, which we published in 2006.