

Finding Treasures

Correspondences from abroad can be valuable.

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On a number of occasions too many to count, I have been called to appraise and/or purchase a cover collection only to find that the really valuable material held by the owner is in a closet or attic where it has been stored away for years, even decades.

Here is one of the "rules of thumb" within the philatelic buying community that should be of interest to every philatelist: *Quite often, some of the most outstanding discoveries in our hobby are made when exploring some of the family papers that people have kept hidden away—and sometimes virtually forgotten.*

The covers shown above are what one might call "immigrant postal history." These are the kinds of covers that are found in old shoeboxes where a family has kept the papers and letters to mem-

bers of a family who have immigrated to the United States and whose relatives were still in the "old country" corresponding with their loved ones. Such correspondences are cherished by the descendants and for preservation's sake, they generally have been carefully kept in their original envelopes.

I'll admit that much of this kind of material is not particularly valuable, but then, it's a truism that among such large holdings are usually found some gems. Things like World War I or II era censored covers—or important first flight covers, or usages of some of the pricey high denomination stamps on cover.

To give you an example of the kind of discoveries that can be made when exploring some of these old shoeboxes, here's an apocryphal story:

One night several years ago, a buyer in the attic of a 1940s era house came upon a stack of perhaps 50 covers sent during the

period when Israel was becoming an independent country. It was a trying time for that country and its mails. The British, who had occupied the region, were departing, and so was their mail service. So a number of Israelis established a private mail service called the "Palestine Emergency Delivery Services (PEDS)" for a short-lived period in 1948. Covers with the distinctive PEDS cancel are extremely scarce—and worth as much as \$400 each, maybe more in some cases.

And here, of course, were 50 of them! The buyer gave the owners a fair price and departed with them after the former had retained the letters inside the covers.

Every stamp collector should always be on the lookout for opportunities like this. They don't come along too often, but inevitably they DO come along. Virtually all covers were at one time in someone's attic or storage medium. ✉