

# Trish Kaufmann shares her passion for Confederate States philately

In the fascinating arena of Confederate States philately, Patricia A. "Trish" Kaufmann is one of its most engaging, knowledgeable and respected participants.

She is editor-in-chief of the Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History, which received the literature grand award at the American Philatelic Society Stampshow in 2013. Her decades of service to the hobby — as a dealer, exhibitor, writer, and researcher — led to her receiving the Elizabeth Pope award for lifetime contributions to philately in 2016. She also was elected to the APS board of vice presidents in 2016.

**Q: You're among the prominent women leaders of the stamp hobby. What opportunities are out there to make stamp collecting more inviting for women in the 21st century?**

**A:** I don't see the necessity of specifically making stamp collecting more enticing for women. My fear to that approach would be akin to giving dolls to little girls to play with while giving little boys BB guns. In the 21st century, what appeals to men should appeal equally to women.

I specialize in an area that deals with the Civil War, battles, soldiers, and other so-called "male topics." Less interesting to me because I'm a woman? Absolutely not.

The caveat to that is in the attitudes of male versus female. It goes without saying that dealers and collectors should treat women with respect when they ask questions while trying to learn. Forty years ago, there was often a dismissive attitude toward women, but I'm happy to say that I've watched that greatly change for the better.

As widely held public perceptions go, there goes the hobby. Statistics across the board show women gaining ground in most professional areas. The more well-educated and successful women become, the more they will be enticed by what our hobby has to offer.

**Q: How did you get your start in Confederate States philately? What motivated you to become a dealer?**

**A:** It was fortunate that I was introduced to Confederate States postal history at the age of 17. I fell in love with the stories behind the covers, the people and the intricacies of mail movement during a volatile time in American history.

I initially learned about Confederate stamps out of necessity; they were secondary to the covers in my eyes at that time. I believe that is how the majority of Confederate collectors evolve. Now I love and study the whole range of Confederate stamps and postal history.

As to what motivated me to become a dealer, in 1973 I was offered a job by John W. Kaufmann, who had moved from his native New York to Washington, D.C., to (in his words) "find his own city." So initially I was motivated by a paycheck.

I was John's first employee. I had recently signed him up for reinstatement to the Confederate Stamp Alliance (CSA) at a show where I was working a CSA booth. He had been a member as a teen but had dropped out and lost track of the Alliance. Together,



Trish Kaufmann at her booth at World Stamp Show-NY 2016, held May 28-June 4 in New York City, holding the Atlanta section of the Confederate De La Rue altered plate.

we incorporated under the name John W. Kaufmann, Inc., and ran 142 auctions and 11 mail-bid sales during the 1970-80s. We were married in 1975.

When John died in 1988, I continued the auction business for another nine months and then decided I did not want to go it alone. It was a difficult decision but the right one for me at the time. I continued part time in the business until one of my former auction clients encouraged me to return full time to specialize solely in Confederate States. He said I came alive when I talked about Confederates and that with my passion for and knowledge of the subject, I should be finding material for him to buy. So I did.

With that verbal kick in the pants, I jumped back into it full time and have never looked back.

**Q: When you were coming up in the hobby, to whom did you turn for advice and guidance?**

**A:** For the most part, I was self-taught. Brian Green taught me the barest basics about Confederates, but when I began working with worldwide material during auction days, that was trial by fire. John and I mainly knew Confederates, learned U.S., and hired a staff for the foreign.

Confederates were and are an ongoing learning experience. I continually learn something new. It is part of the joy and excitement of the hobby. The more you know, the more you learn and the greater the joy. And the more you have an obligation to share your knowledge with others.

The late Jack E. Molesworth was definitely someone who sticks in my memory as a guiding light during the early days. In his later years, and at that time the largest retail dealer in Confederates, I kidningly told him that I aspired to be "Jacqueline." (i.e., a female Jack Molesworth).

But without a doubt, the biggest influence on my philatelic life was my late husband, John Kaufmann. He encouraged me at every step; he never felt threatened by a strong woman, and he emboldened me to pursue my philatelic dreams.

**Q: If you could change one thing about our hobby, what would it be and why?**

**A:** The thing that immediately comes to mind is addressing all the nay-sayers who proclaim that

the hobby is dying. It is not dying. But it is changing. And those at the forefront of philately need to recognize that and to change with it or perish.

I was fortunate that I was on the Internet bandwagon from the get-go. I had a philatelic website in 1996 — a full 20 years ago. I went to night classes at the local community college to learn HTML (standard computer markup language to create websites).

I take my stock to four or five stamp shows a year. That's it. I don't hold auctions. I have an extensive specialized retail website, and the vast majority of my sales are from that website. I don't print a sales catalog — too much of the stock would be sold online before the catalog could even be mailed — not cost effective.

There is virtually not a week that goes by that I don't get an order from someone new to me, new to Confederates and some new to the hobby. Many of them are older in age — sixties and up. Younger would be thirties, forties and fifties.

If you look at the philatelic magazine photos of yore, most of the collectors — other than being mostly men — were also older, just as they are today. Why? It is obvious. At an older age, they have both the time and the money.

I remember one of my then college-age stepdaughters bemoaning the fact that all "the guys with the hot cars are so old." Yes — the same reasoning. Young men, for the most part, don't yet have the money to buy hot cars, cool stamps or whatever. But as their careers solidify and grow, they marry and their children begin to leave the nest, they begin searching for things to occupy their leisure time, their brains and their money.

I gave a talk at World Stamp Show in New York recently, titled "An Introduction to Confederate Postal History." The overwhelming majority of the audience were people I did not know. Does that sound like a dying hobby? I think not. And they were engaged and excited, asking innumerable intelligent questions.

So what is the upshot here? I believe it is the need to target the general noncollecting population with whatever philatelic passion excites us personally.

So what in Confederates captured and has kept my attention for 50 years, never swaying? It is the stories that endear me, learning about the people behind the covers — easier than ever to research online in an instant. Or studying the stamps for their many nuances, followed by the feeling of elation when I find something that no other specialist ever noticed; disproving catalog listings and experts of old; studying fakes, fantasies and forgeries; recognizing the importance of that faint marking and what it means in the story of moving the mails.

My wish is that all members of specialty societies would take their personal passions — and we all have them — to the masses and engage them. I can't speak eloquently about Prexies and Swiss cantons, but I can generate excitement for what I do know.

If you aren't terrified of speaking in front of crowds, give talks on your passion. If you aren't a speaker, engage non-collectors in conversation. If you are a writer, share a story in a philatelic magazine. One by one, we can all make a difference in the future of philately. ■