Postmark Collectors Club
by Mike Del Grosso

As we all know philately or "stamp collecting'' can mean more then, well, just collecting stamps or the study of stamps. One aspect of philately is postal history which can include the study of postmarks, post offices, postal systems, postal rates, regulations and other aspects of the movement of mail from place to place. A specialized area of postal history is the collection of postal markings, including various types of cancellations used by postal authorities, such as post office place names, both in operation and those which have been discontinued, auxiliary markings (i.e. "Return to Sender", "Contents Damaged by Fire", etc.), slogans added to canceling devices (i.e."Pray for Peace), types of cancellations used (four bar, Doane, machine, etc.), "killer" bar variations, ship cancels and many other types of markings. Whatever it may be, there is probably someone or group collecting difference examples of their area of interest.

As an example, there is the Postmark Collectors Club (PMCC). Founded in 1946, the club is comprised of individuals primarily interested in the collecting of cancels from all the postal facilities throughout the United States and Canada. These are the cancels which include the name of the post office of Origination, state and date posted- like what used to be applied on all first-class mail years ago. However, some members of the dub also have other related interests such as photographing post office facilities, first day covers, cancels from discontinued post offices, post office pictures on post cards, ship and highway post offices, pictorials and special events, stamps used on mailings, and other specialized interests.

Over time, members have donated postal material to the club which led to the securing, in stages, of facilities to protect and make available for use of the accumulated material. Starting with an old school bus on a member's farm in Ohio, the material was moved to ever larger facilities as the collection grew, including at one time in the former old Lyme, Ohio post office, closed in 1694 located on the grounds of Old Lyme Village near Bellevue, Ohio. In 2003, the PMCC dedicated their newest facility, a 2,400 sq, ft building, which contains the vast collection of postal related material. Collections include some 2,000,000 examples of postal markings in various formats, 40,000 post office photos, extensive ship, military, and highway post office cancels, pictorial, and special event cancels, railway post office markings, an extensive postal research library and other specialized collections. New material is continually added to the museum's collections. Currently the club is planning for an expansion to the museum which will double the size of the facility.

The museum is open on a part-time basis during warm months when the Old Lyme Village is open to visitors and during the twice-a-year "work weeks" when members converge from all parts of the country to sort and file the new material donated to the museum and add to the many collections.

The club's newsletter, the Bulletin, is published monthly keeping members aware of club activities and includes articles on postal history and postal markings.

An annual convention is held during summer months at varied locations around the United States. Convention activities include conducting club business, auctions of duplicate museum material, local tours, speakers and, best of all, mountains of postal items of interest to sort through, free for the taking. This year's convention will be held in late June in Tiffin, Ohio.

The PMCC also publishes Post Office Directories for each state, listing all post offices operating in each state, updated periodically. These directories are the most comprehensive and accurate listings of post offices available- better than anything the USPS publishes!

For more information about the Postmark Collectors Club please visit the website
www postmark s. org.

I'm in the upper left-hand comer.   Photo below of volunteers during a "work week" in 2014