

UPS and the Pandemic – A History

Wow! Since its founding in 1946 by a group of World War II veterans, the Utah Philatelic Society has bounced along through the years with varying degrees of strength. We have persevered and successfully navigated through many changes: rises and falls of membership, changes in venue, many, many changes in leadership. We've even rewritten our constitution a few times. But no one could have anticipated the arrival of a global pandemic, and the impact it would have on something as relatively minor as a stamp club.

In December 2019 we elected a new board, for a term of two years, as usual. That was about the same time that the COVID-19 virus first made its appearance, and by the following March it was clear that this was a worldwide event, soon to be killing thousands of people every day. Our last club meeting was held that March, at which point we were informed by the Sandy Senior Center that they were closing their facility to public meetings and we were no longer able to meet there. Additionally, it was decided that all scheduled stamp shows at the Sons of Utah Pioneers building would be canceled. In short, UPS was shut down. As well as having our meetings canceled, we were no longer able to pass around the circuits we normally received, and our election for president (Dec. 2020) could not be held, extending Joe Ferguson's term into this year.

Our secretary, Linda Snyder, made a valiant effort to keep everyone informed on the status of our meetings, and also the activities of our members, as she circulated emails describing some members' philatelic activities. Without club meetings to attend, many members now had more time to devote to organizing their collections or by purchasing stamps online. But clearly, nothing could adequately replace the value of our in-person meetings.

By the spring of 2021, vaccines began to appear for the virus and infection rates started to decline. However, variants for the virus also started to show up, some of which were resistant to the vaccines, reminding us that we weren't done with the pandemic. But we decided to go ahead with our first stamp show, in May, which was well-attended, and our first club meeting, also well-attended. A casual survey among club members showed that practically everyone had received the vaccine, making us feel at least a little safer as a group.

During the pandemic Sandy City, which controls the Senior Center, decided that it would no longer keep the Center open for evening meetings. Even though UPS had been meeting there for many years and had made substantial financial contributions to the Center each year, we were unable to convince Sandy's new mayor of our great interest in continuing to meet there. For that reason the board agreed to take advantage of the offer from Sons of Utah Pioneers to have our bi-monthly meetings at their facility. It meant paying a \$25 rental for each meeting, but it offered the advantages of evening hours and also wonderful storage space for the books, supplies and equipment the club has accumulated over the years. To date, we have had two meetings there and will probably continue to gather there for the foreseeable future.

So, we have weathered the pandemic about as well as could be expected. Some members contracted the virus and fell ill, but no virus-related deaths were reported. We have made adjustments to our meeting hours and place, and we are hopeful to move forward and soon adapt to whatever “new normal” the pandemic has created.