

FLOREX

The History of the Beginning, the End & the Rebirth as a WSP Event

By A. Stephen Patrick & Francis Ferguson (December 2020)

Introduction

The history of FLOREX is tied directly to the fortunes of The Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs. While FLOREX benefited directly over the years, because of its association with the Federation, this tight relationship also led to the end of the show as the Federation dissolved due to declining interest. This document gives a brief history of the show and the relationships over the years, and the future of the re-established FLOREX World Series of Philately event. For a much more richly detailed history of the first 50 years of FLOREX, reference the related documents and pictures on the website. (www.FLOREXStampShow.com)

1949 -1985 - The Beginning

Representatives from five Florida stamp clubs met in St. Petersburg, Florida on December 18, 1949, to form the Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs. The first convention was held in Winter Haven in 1950.

The second convention was hosted by the Miami Stamp Club. Ray von Klippstein of Orlando was elected as Secretary. The third convention November 20-22, 1952, was hosted by the Tampa Collectors Club, and Larry Kittinger of Winter Park was named president. This was the first year a souvenir cover was produced by the Federation, and the decision was made to rename the show for the coming year FLOREX, short for Florida Exhibition.

The 1953 FLOREX was held at the Angebilt Hotel in downtown Orlando. There were 33 members on the convention committee including Major Charles Libman and future Orlando Mayor Carl Langford. Roy Crane, the creator of the comics Buz Sawyer, drew the cachet and United States Post Office Department provided the first FLOREX Convention Station cancel.

The show continued to move around the state to venues including St. Petersburg, Leesburg, West Palm Beach, Clearwater, Daytona Beach, and Sarasota. In 1972, the show was held in Clearwater and continued to be held in the Tampa Bay area for the next 14 years.

1986-1999 - The Orlando Years

In 1986, the St. Petersburg hotel that had hosted FLOREX for seven years “lost it lease,” and a dedicated group led by Phil Fettig of the Central Florida Stamp Club became the host for the next 14 years. Regretfully, the Florida Federation dissolved in 1999, and the

last FLOREX celebrated 50 years of philatelic fun. The name FLOREX was acquired by the Florida Stamp Dealers Association (FSDA).

2000 - Present Day -A New Beginning

With the closing of the old FLOREX show, a yearly stamp bourse of 30 plus dealers continued to be held in late fall in Orlando and was called the Florida State Stamp Show. Phil Fettig continued to act as General Chairman with sponsorship moving to the Florida Stamp Dealers' Association. The show continued in 2000 and 2001 in a much smaller fashion. In 2002, Francis Ferguson was selected as General Chairman to replace the retiring Phil Fettig.

In 2003, discussions of the show's future, led to a commitment by the FSDA to the process of rejuvenating the show, with the goal of re-instating its World Series of Philately status. This process began in earnest in 2004 under the direction of General Chairman Francis Ferguson and critical support from the Central Florida Stamp Club. The show was renamed FLOREX - The Florida State Stamp Show.

Details involving the show venue, exhibits, judging, awards, dealer participation, society meetings, and the creation of a show program are all part of the process of becoming a WSP event. As of June of 2008, FLOREX received approval from APS and CANEJ to join the ranks of the World Series of Philately shows. FLOREX is now a fully certified WSP event with the Grand Champion going on to participate at the annual APS sponsored Champion of Champions competition. The long-term commitment to FLOREX can be seen in the many ways, but the one most prominent is the fact that the show has reserved show dates on the venue's calendar, up to and including the year 2022.

After a 13 year run at the Central Florida Fairgrounds and Exposition Park (2005-2017), the show in 2018 has moved to a modern facility at the Osceola Heritage Park, in Kissimmee. It is expected that this up-to-date building will serve the show for many years to come.

The show for 2020 was cancelled because of the on-going COVID-19 public health pandemic. There was simply no way possible to hold the show, safely in the current environment.

This whole process of recertification, has involved the dedication and commitment of countless volunteers from the Central Florida Stamp Club and support from the Florida Stamp Dealers' Association. Without dedication, and support from both of these groups, this show will not happen. As you enjoy and participate in the FLOREX show, please take the time to acknowledge the people who make this all happen -- one "thank you" can go a long way!