

# American Astrophilately

*American Astrophilately: The First 50 Years*,  
by David S. Ball / A&A Publishers,

1312 Winchester Drive  
Charleston, SC 29407

8" x 10" Softbound, 344 Pages with DVD  
of 700+ pages of supplemental material.

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USA shipping and handling.

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*This prodigious work on Space Event covers has been reviewed in Orbit, Topical Times, Airmail Journal, and American Philatelist. The American Philatelic Society awarded the book the Gold Medal for Literature at the Richmond APS Stampshow in August 2010, the largest event of the year.*

*Since then it has been bought by collectors in sixteen nations. It is sold by dealers in Berlin, Rome and Sydney and well as several here in the States. American Astrophilately is sold at the National Postal and Air & Space Museum (the most popular on the planet). It is stocked at Barnes and Noble and the Kansas Cosmosphere. It is now available at Kennedy Space Center, Johnson Space Center, and Marshall NASA facilities.*



*American Astrophilately has been nominated for the prestigious 2010 Eugene M. Emme Astronautical Literature by the American Astronautical Society that recognizes "the truly outstanding book... about the positive impact of astronautics upon society." The award is in honor of Eugene M. Emme, NASA's first historian. Previous recipients have included; Frederick I. Ordway III, James R. Hansen and Arthur C. Clarke.*

## Review by Jim Reichman, Space Unit

I have to admit, up front, that I harbor misgivings about some of the tenets that form the foundation of the philatelic study field being labeled "astrophilately". In particular, these concerns relate to the exclusionist guidelines these collectors have adopted which disqualify otherwise world-class, philatelic exhibits relating to the history of spaceflight. On the other hand you have to admire the tenacity these astrophilatelists employ to seek out and document the details of philatelic, commemorative, space covers and their backgrounds. Such attention to detail is the "right stuff" that turns any regular space collector into a true cosmic-philatelist.

David Ball's book on American astrophilately is one that few aspiring astrophilatelists should be without. Although narrowly focused on the space programs of the United States, it does provide guidelines and useful examples of how astrophilatelists around the world should address and model their own philatelic research and documentation energies. I would even go so far as to recommend the book to the rest of the space collectors/philatelists, i.e., those of us whose cosmic collecting and exhibiting interests tend to violate one or more boundaries of the astrophilatelists' precepts.

One of the main reasons for these recommendations is that a major por-

tion of David's book is filled with an interesting collection of philatelic monograms, vignettes, and even some short these written by the experts and first-hand participants in the field of astrophilately. These articles address a wide variety of philatelic subjects related to the American space program. Although not a new approach to adding authenticity and scope to a space book's content, it certainly enlivened the discussions of what could have quickly devolved into a matter-of-fact documentation of acceptable and unacceptable astrophilatelic exhibition materials.

One of these articles was of particular interest to my own Russian spaceflight philatelic interests. This was a fascinating story about how one enterprising stamp dealer was able to get two, same-day postmarks (one from Moscow and one from Cape Canaveral) on the same covers commemorating both launches (Soyuz and Apollo) of the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project. Given the number and variety of these types of discussions in the book, it would be fair to say that almost every space collector will find at least one and probably many of these articles that will pique their own personal interests.

Interspersed in and around these articles are others written personally by David that introduce and supplement those astrophilately subjects. Included in his writings are discussions supporting the foundations for and justification of the astrophilatelic tenets that deal with issues like acceptable postoffices, time zones, postmark classifications, and backdating.

Interestingly, some of these discussions address the problems associated with blindly applying some of these tenets. One case in point, brought up by the author, is the astrophilatelic tenet requiring covers be postmarked on the event date at/near the ground station controlling the spacecraft. Strict adherence to this requirement makes no sense when, e.g., postmarking philatelic covers commemorating a deep-space probe event when telemetric news of that event (i.e., whether it actually happened long/short was successful) would not reach the ground station until the day after these covers were required to be postmarked because of how far out in deep-space the probe was at.

Since this book is being billed as a resource that would help novice col-



Typical spread from Section II, featuring covers for historical missions. The author has chosen six covers from launch to recovery, juxtaposed with important milestone dates of each mission. This layout is for the Apollo 11 Lunar landing mission.

lectors identify envelopes which meet the International Philatelic Federation guidelines for exhibiting, I went on eBay and randomly selected US space covers being offered there that fit within the timeline and space-mission boundaries addressed in David's book. Each such cover selected was then compared against the reference materials and guidelines of the book. Many were fairly easy to categorize and were, in fact, even included in the hundreds of the full-color, example covers shown in the "World of Covers" section. Unfortunately, there was almost as many for which an assessment was in doubt or could not be made. Were it not for an open email dialog with the author to help resolve these issues, I would have been left wondering. My concern is that other readers/collectors will probably not have such access to help resolve their questions.

From my perspective, these problems arise because of two issues. First is the lack of adequate introductory explanations on how to read, interpret, and relate the information, matrices, postmark/cachet images, and associ-

ated comments found in Parts II and III of the book and the files on the accompanying computer disk (CD). Without such information, the average reader will easily get lost amidst all the philatelic details. Second is the lack of an adequate editorial review which should have caught and resolved those deficiencies as well as several other mistakes that were found in the book.

Bottom line is that this is probably too valuable a resource to pass up, especially for committed astrophilatelists. However, readers need to buy it with the understanding that the book does have a number of content issues. My recommendation is for purchasers to first read the Part I astrophilatelic articles and similar materials located in the "Articles" folder on the CD then read the seminar briefing slides (also on the CD) labeled "Section for Astrophilately" before venturing into the other materials in this book. With any luck, even die-hard, cosmic-philatelists like myself can learn a thing or two from these astrophilatelists.

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### Putting Their Stamp on the Moon

by guest author Chris Calle, with Paul Calle

On July 28, 1976, the United States Postal Service issued two stamps to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first landing on the Moon. One stamp marked the one-way mission and the other 28 days commensurate voyage. The stamps were the third and fourth in a sequence designed to mark the major milestones and events of the Apollo 11 mission. These three stamps, however, are linked by more than their theme — each stamp was designed for an artist with the surname "Calle".



Paul Calle's interest in Space Art dates back to his early years as an illustrative painter and using a thick and white acrylic-based technique to create his Jack Science Fiction magazine covers and Air Force posters. In the 1960s, during his military assignment at the time, he designed and painted the art for the Apollo 11 mission. In October of 1974 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was seeking "in private" for research into the problems of light and color and the artist's composition. The result of the "Space Art" contest was the result of the "Space Art" contest.



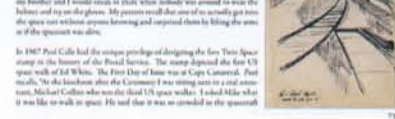
In 1972 Paul Calle was chosen as one of the first eight artists of the newly established NASA Art Program. The purpose of the program was to record for history, space exploration through the eyes of artists. At 33 years of age, Paul was the youngest of the group. Beginning with Gemini's Program, Mercury flights in May of 1964, Paul Calle has documented the entire, unending Primary Mission, Gemini, Apollo, and the Space Shuttle from the launch facilities of Cape Kennedy to the orbital centers in the South Atlantic.

When no suitable arrangements were made to be photographed, he had to use his own resources to be included. We needed a group and I used the various bodies of interest. One day I saw an excellent background for the artist's and I thought they would make an interesting picture. Being a free spirit I contacted the group and they were through the red tape and I had a very interesting and some great shots of the complex. I contacted my private prints and set about working on my design.

After about half an hour I was coming through the tall grass when I saw the security police. I laughed and said I was wondering how long it would take you to find me. They did not laugh and told me they had been watching me. "I had several prints made," I said. "You've got a very good camera or they were my own work with pencil and paper to make some drawings." It seemed funny at the time but the next thing I knew I was being escorted to the security building to find someone at NASA who could identify me. Jim Don, our contact, came and showed up the man's recording. While talking to the man I said, "Paul, you're with the group." It seemed odd I was a highly sensitive area. The building was a direct complex that would show any market going off course.



"One of the men I found was a long strap that led up to the John Backus. You could get around him to the backer that would send Gemini-Casper some space. While doing my drawing I had someone of the many engineers that were on the ramp preparing the Cape's flight. I was fascinated with their activities and what I saw there they could work as when they wanted to go. They explained with all the information loaded in the computer they knew exactly where the rocket would go. They asked if I could capture how I looked up at the rocket, which they arranged in my hands, passed to them through my arms on my hand. They were holding the pencil and put that stamp on a blank piece of paper. They were so focused for me to see my work done."



"Being around my father's artwork had always been exciting," Chris remembered. "I realized my father might have captured the design of the stamp." Getting up his credit was in one house as my sibling and I had his name on my father's artwork. Space travel was so new and exciting that I described as much of the excitement of the time and my father's involvement that I could. In 1967 when I was working a painting titled 'Keyhole' I met Paul Calle, the artist who designed the Gemini, Apollo, and Space Shuttle stamps. I met Paul Calle and he told me he had been to my father's to see his artwork. My dad and the men, behind and down up to the garage as a still life scene and I had made my brother and I would recall to them when nobody was around to see the father and my on the globe. My parents recall that one of my recalls goes into the space art without anyone knowing and captured them by being the one of the youngest was also.

Typical article from Section I, this one by Guest Author Chris Calle about his father's body of work with US Space stamps.

## Review by John Macco, Space Unit

As an astrophilatelyst for almost 40 years, I am always looking for reference books on the early space program, its covers and astronauts to add to my space library. My quest for this information has been fulfilled with the publication of *American Astrophilately*. What author David Ball did when writing this book was to solicit articles from astrophilatelists on various aspects on space cover collecting. Articles from Morris Beck, Joe Frasketi, Steve Durst, Ed Bizub, Ross Smith, Eberhard Coelle, Reuben Ramkissoon, Sean Marsar, Beatrice Bachmann and Les Winick are included in the book. One of the articles I was especially interested in was the article by Eberhard Coelle on the creation of the dual cancelled ASTP launch cover cancelled Moscow and Cape Canaveral. Eberhard related all the logistics needed to make the creation of the cover a success. After these articles, there are scans of covers from the early space programs and scans of the postmarks associated with the covers as well as the postmarks associated with the NASA Official Cachets. Also included with the book is a resource DVD which includes articles, reference spreadsheets, sample exhibits, FIP regulations and the Paul Calle archives of his stamp designs. I would highly recommend this book to all astrophilatelists to add to their space library.

**“An extraordinary contribution to the field.”**

— Don Boggs, *Boggs Spacebooks*

## Review by Charles J., Vukotich, Jr. Space Unit, Associate Editor

American Astrophilately may be viewed two ways. It is an interesting book, The first 120 pages features articles by many experts in astrophilately. These would be of interest to a beginner, as well as to an advanced collec-



Typical page from Section III, a compendium of postmarks from a variety of missions, both machine and hand cancels, for key events within that mission.

tor, like your Associate Editor. There is emphasis on recovery ships, flown covers (especially for the Apollo Program), official NASA cachets, and the Apollo-Soyuz Test Program. There is a nice introduction to the work of Chris and Paul Calle, a subject of great interest, which readers should and can explore in more detail in other works. This is followed by two huge sections on covers which are pretty, and even fun to look at, but is probably of interest to a more beginning collector.

American Astrophilately is identified by the author as a guide book for exhibiting, helping collectors to recognize envelopes which meet the International Philatelic Federation (FIP) guidelines for exhibition for United States material at stamp shows.

Your Associate Editor has a few minor issues with the covers and cancels section. There are a number of early space launch covers with suspect cancels, and even though these are identified as such, they are out of place in this section, and should have been

**“One impressive book,  
and one well worth  
getting your hands on.”**

Colin Burgess, *Into the Silent Sea*

included in a separate section on suspect covers – an article on this subject would have been a good adjunct to an article on Riser fakes. The cancels on these covers are shown in the cancellation section without note that they are suspect. It is probable that many collectors would be confused.

The enclosed DVD has a ton of material. Some of it is useful and interesting. The Calle archives are just cool, and the best material on the DVD. A lot of the other materials can be considered to be very basic. It's not clear why the “philately” excerpt from the Postal Manual and a declassified report “Animals and Man in Space” were included. On the other hand, filling the DVD with material doesn't cost more, so perhaps this is just a picky observation. There is a whole section on FIP regulations. Be aware, the rules for astrophilatelistic exhibiting are changing, so these are of limited usefulness – those considering creating an astrophilatelistic exhibit would be well served by contacting the Space Unit for guidance on the updated changes.

It's fun for beginning collectors to read about the astrophilatelistic hobby; it really adds to the enjoyment of collecting. American Astrophilately is a good basic reference book. If you have no reference books in your philatelic library, this one can be recommended. More experienced collectors will find less to like about American Astrophilately, but many of the articles are interesting and the Calle material is definitely worthwhile. Forward the URL ([www.AmericanAstrophilately.com](http://www.AmericanAstrophilately.com)) to your family, and tell them that Father's Day, Birthday, etc. is coming. It would be a lot better than the useless stuff they usually buy.

## Excerpts from Topical Times Review by George B. Griffenhagen

“The first 120 pages of this volume describe U.S. stratospheric balloon flights initiated on June 2, 1957, and unmanned satellites commencing with Explorer launch Jan. 31, 1958. This is followed by launching and tracking ship covers for Mercury (1961-63), Gemini (1963-66), Apollo (1966-72), Skylab (1973) and the Space Shuttle (1973-2004).

“Part two of the volume illustrates, in full color, 45 unmanned flight covers, 48 Project Mercury covers, 66 Project Gemini covers, 90 Project Apollo covers, and 36 post-Apollo covers. They include the launch date as well as the recovery date.

“Part three illustrates more than 800 postmarks, divided into the aforementioned groupings. These postmarks commence with Explorer 1, launched in 1958, to the X-Prize civilian space flight in 2004. The volume concludes with a glossary of terms employed and a short bibliography. The volume also includes a DVD, consisting of an equivalent of 700 pages that picture sample award-winning exhibits, explains International Philatelic Guidelines (FIP) regulations for exhibiting, APS judging regulations and the landmark article on NASA VIP cards authored by Ray Cartier.

“As the introduction suggests, this landmark volume is essential for all space event cover collectors and budding astrophilatelists. It is our conviction that a copy should be included in all philatelic libraries.”

**“If you are interested in  
collecting U.S. Space covers,  
this is a ‘must-have’ book”**

— Bonny Farmer, *The American Philatelist*

*The author is scheduled for book signings of American Astrophilately at Smithsonian Air & Space May 31st, National Postal Museum June 1st, and the Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles on June 2nd, 2011.*