

## BRUCE R. McINTYRE AND HIS VISITING FIREMEN OF PHILATELY

The Visiting Firemen of Philately was formed on April 1, 1933. The organizational meeting took place at the open house of the Beaver Valley Philatelic Society in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. The purpose of the organization was to promote fun and add a bit of pleasure to stamp conventions. The meetings, called "conflagrations" were usually held in the evenings after a stamp show. It was here the fun and frolic began usually lasting into the wee hours of the morning.



*B.R. McIntyre*

Before one could become a member of the Visiting Firemen, they had to be initiated. These initiation ceremonies were similar to those of other fraternities of the time. Secrecy as to what took place at these initiations was a must. However, it has been said that such initiations added to the merriment of the evening. Many prominent philatelists were members; such as, Harry Lindquist, George Linn, Herman Herst and Roscoe Martin. Total membership at one time was said to be over 300. The membership was mostly in the states of Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania.

No one really knows why the organization took its name. We do know, however, that the clubs were structured like a fire department. Clubs that were established in various cities were called "Hose Companies". Members took the names of Battalion Chief, Hydrant Tender, Hose Tender, etc. Each member wore a badge with his name and membership number upon it.

Announcements to conflagrations were sent out in specially prepared covers as shown in the exhibit. These covers were hand drawn and hand painted by Bruce R. McIntyre, the founder of the Visiting Firemen of Philately. -----It might be well to note here that by trade B. R., as he liked to be called, was a commercial photographer and news cameraman from Warren, Ohio. He also was one of the early pioneer cachet artists producing hand drawn and hand painted covers starting in the late 1920s.

Once the Visiting Firemen were organized, an election was held, and McIntyre was elected Hydrant Tender. This, however, didn't last long. While the history of the Visiting Firemen is rather vague, there was dissention among the members and McIntyre was removed from office. He remained a member but seemed to never get over the fact that his so called friends, whom helped him organize the Visiting Firemen, turned against him by voting him out of office. After this, McIntyre no longer made his special covers announcing the up coming conflagrations.

The Visiting Firemen of Philately held their last conflagration on December 5, 1942, in Akron, Ohio. The organization ceased to meet in early 1943, the reason probably being World War II.

**THE EXHIBIT** begins showing what is believed to be the earliest known cover to announce the formation or organizational meeting of the Visiting Firemen of Philately. Other conflagration covers are shown announcing meetings of the Visiting Firemen in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York. A cover is shown commemorating the formation of the "Sprinkling Cans", a group formed by the wives of the Visiting Firemen. Some of the covers have special postmarks, and are so noted. Foreign Visiting Firemen covers are included and explained. In the conclusion of the exhibit, McIntyre portrays, on covers, his removal from office. The covers shown are rare and one of a kind. Also shown in the exhibit is memorabilia drawn by McIntyre. Such items are the first membership card of the Visiting Firemen and a one of a kind membership certificate.