

## A piece of history

# Collection brings the past to life

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NEWS-SUN

**W**ade Shipley found his postal material collection by digging through old ladies' drawers.

No, he didn't get his hands slapped for touching any unmentionables, but he did stumble across pieces of history. Shipley has a whole safe full of letters, postcards

and stamps he happened upon in his friends' drawers or acquired at postal history shows during the past seven decades.

Shipley's desire to collect might also be the result of his mother's and grandmother's pack rat personality rubbing off on him.

He preserved his collection in acid-free covers in binders. He had 800 at one time; he currently has 350 pieces in his postal material collection, which includes 50 postmarks, envelopes and letters from Lea County.

Every now and then the 79-year-old Lovington man looks back on his collection tied to New Mexico and Lea County history. He and his wife are able to read the writing on the cards.

While he has learned dates and places relevant to New Mexico, Shipley said he collects for his own personal satisfaction.

"What can you add to history but a little knowledge, perhaps?" he said.

### Love of history leads to collecting

Shipley has had an interest in history for as long as he can remember. And that led him to become interested in stamp collecting.

Shipley recalled a trip his fami-

ly took to the World Fair in Chicago when he was 12. He spent more time in the stamp shops than looking around town.

Another reason Shipley believes he started collecting stamps was President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the 1930s everyone — and Shipley was no exception — was a fan of FDR who was known to be a philatelist (stamp collector).

Money was hard to come by during the Great Depression era; Shipley didn't have any extra money to spend so he asked friends to save stamps for him.

Back then, collectors didn't see many high-value stamps because most couldn't afford them. His first stamp was an ordinary 3 cent stamp issued in 1935.

The young collector cut the stamps off the envelopes and glued them into a book until he learned more about properly caring for his collection.

Eventually his stamp collecting evolved into collecting New Mexico territorial post office postmarks. There were 1,200 territorial post offices before New Mexico became a state in 1912.

See COLLECTOR, Page 13



KIMBERLY RYAN/NEWS-SUN

Lea County historian and postal collector Wade Shipley collects photographs of old post offices along with their postmarks, envelopes and letters from Lea County — some even date back to when New Mexico was a territory.



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