

2020-03-23

Postponement of the biennial international CCI Congress in St. Louis



Our chairman Bob van de Velde has received the following message from Tom Gallegos und Luann Woneis, the organizers of the 19th Congress of the [Chess Collectors International](#) to be held in St. Louis, U.S.A., originally in May 27-31, 2020:

It has been a difficult decision, but with Coronavirus-related closures and travel restrictions worsening by the day, I'm afraid we must bow to the inevitable, and postpone CCI's 19th Biennial Congress (currently scheduled for May 27-31) until September 2-6, 2020. This new date is provisional, of course. If the pandemic is not over by that time, obviously we might have to postpone it further, or even cancel it altogether. We should know more as events continue to unfold over the spring and summer.

After having explained that the new dates are very favourable for especially the American attendance, Tom Gallegos continues with a short survey regarding the exhibition, exposed during the Congress.

As all members of our Society should know, they have a permanent invitation to attend the congresses and the meetings of de CCI. Therefore we publish the complete letter of Tom Gallegos below.

Dear CCI Members, and other Chess Friends,

It has been a difficult decision, but with Coronavirus-related closures and travel restrictions worsening by the day, I'm afraid we must bow to the inevitable, and postpone CCI's 19th Biennial Congress (currently scheduled for May 27-31) until September 2-6, 2020.

This new date is provisional, of course. If the pandemic is not over by that time, obviously we might have to postpone it further, or even cancel it altogether. We should know more as events continue to unfold over the spring and summer. But this new date has several advantages. It is Labor Day weekend here in the States (Labor Day itself is actually on the 7th), a holiday that should help boost our USA attendance, to say the least. The heat of summer will have broken, but for parents of small children, school will not yet have started. We have just received word from the Chase Park Plaza that the room rate will remain the same, making our luxury hotel a real bargain over the holiday weekend.

Later in September does not work for us, as we have other collecting conferences to attend (assuming things have returned to a state of normalcy by that time). Luann and I can't very well organize a meeting that we ourselves would be unable to attend.

Some have suggested holding the meeting in November or even next year, but again, we start running into conflicts with other societies, and we are having a hard time imagining that the pandemic will still be raging in September. If it is, we will all have much bigger problems than attending a CCI meeting.

One further significant advantage of Labor Day weekend is that the WCHOF museum exhibition, "Dare to Know: Chess in the Age of Reason" will still be running. It is not possible to delay the meeting until next year and still expect to see this exhibition. Remember, we will have an Enlightenment theme for this meeting. So many of our planned activities and lectures revolve around this theme that if the meeting must be postponed until next year, we might as well not have it at all. This particular exhibition has always been central to our planning of this particular meeting. They are joined at the hip.

At this point, the WCHOF is moving forward with work on "Dare to Know" with help from Luann and me, who are loaning a large part of our personal collection to be put on display. However, the planned opening date of April 8th is currently in limbo, since the WCHOF has just closed its galleries to the public until further notice. I don't believe they are planning to open a show in a closed gallery, with no one there to view it, but we will just have to wait and see how this all plays out. For now, just keep in mind that the meeting Luann and I have been planning has always, and will always, revolve around "Dare to Know" (which will cover the years from roughly 1700 through 1830). Without this exhibition, we really don't have a meeting to offer you.

This is not just any ordinary museum exhibition. In addition to sets, boards, books and other artifacts from our own collection, other contributors to "Dare to Know" are scheduled to include the following:

Collection of Dr. George and Vivian Dean
Collection of Dr. Thomas Thomsen
Collection of Jon Crumiller
Collection of Phil Brykman
Collection of António Horta-Osório
Collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia

If all goes according to plan, there will be antique chess sets of truly global importance in this exhibition, particularly those from the Dean collection, many of which have never been exhibited before, anywhere. The Library Company of Philadelphia is sending us the last known remnants of Wolfgang von Kempelen's Turk, the legendary chess automaton which debuted at the court of Empress Maria Theresa in 1770, and was destroyed in a museum fire in 1854. The world-shaking Encyclopédie of Diderot and d'Alembert will be there (a set of the true first editions, 35 vols.

published 1751-1780), along with a genuine Encyclopédie chess set to go with it. And much, much more.

Assuming this Coronavirus pandemic does not result in the end of the world as we know it, we are bound and determined to present this historic exhibition to you at our earliest opportunity, which right now looks like it should be in early September.

Therefore, we hope you can keep your travel plans flexible and join us in St. Louis over Labor Day weekend. For obvious reasons, our registration deadline (currently March 31) is hereby extended to the end of July. If you have already registered for the May meeting and paid your fees, and you absolutely cannot attend the Labor Day postponement, just let us know, and we will have our Treasurer Bill Fordney issue you a full refund. (If the meeting becomes impossible to hold at all due to global events, everyone who registered and paid fees will receive a full refund.)

As we are using a BCC format to comply with European privacy rules, may I please ask the following:

WEBMASTERS: Please post this to CCI and all other related websites (GSM, Goddesschess, CH&LS, etc.).

NEWSLETTERS: Jim and Duncan, please publish this in the next issues of The Chess Collector and CCI-USA.

MICHAEL WILTSHIRE: Please forward this on to the European membership. (You have my previous list of who these have already gone to.)

Please stay tuned for further updates as they occur. And thank you for your patience and understanding during this difficult time. Stay safe and stay healthy!

Best Wishes,

Tom Gallegos &
Luann Woneis,
Organizers

CHESS COLLECTORS INTERNATIONAL