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QUARTERLY

Guest Editorial.

The Collector's Bitter Half

Shirley Whittington

I'm married to a man who still likes to play Post Office. I had no idea, when I travelled down the aisle, that the man waiting at the end of it was addicted to pasties, although I should have suspected something. He kept bragging about how he got my ring at half-catalouge.

The honeymoon was barely over when he began spending his evenings poring over watermarks. Envelopes arrived in the mail for him, with mysterious postmarks - France, Australia, Germany, If I threw away an envelope bearing the latest commemorative, he wouldn't peak to me for days. When people came to see us in our first apartment, he'd lure them to see his air mail collection, and I would get stuck with the dishes.

A Reader's Digest article suggested that shared hobbies made happy marriages, I read it, and breezed into his den. "Hi!" I burred. "Whatcha doing? Can I watch?" And I perched on the corner of his desk, with my trousseau negligee fanning and fluttering about.

He looked up at me over the top of his glasses. "I was," he said ruefully, "doing my stamps. Would you get up? Carefully? You're sitting on a Queen Victoria Jubilee, unhinged." He was beginning to look a little unhinged himself. "Gee, I'm sorry," said I "Here - let me clean up this mess." And I started scooping up the stamps like so many Rice Krispies.

These are things Reader's Digest didn't mention in that article on togetherness in marriage. When you enter the premises of a Philatelist, you do so gently. The slightest breeze scented though it may be with Arpege and goodness knows what else - will catapult those bits of paper, and your relationship, into chaos.

Also - you can pick up chicken bones or corn on corn on the cob with your fingers, but never stamps, The collectible kind have to be lifted tenderly, with tweezers (apparently a philatelic term for "tongs"Ed).

Considering the ancient and possibly diseased tongues that may have licked those stamps, one might suppose that the tweezers were a hygienic precaution. Not so. The reverse is true. Tweezers protect the stamp, not the collector.

Over the year I have discovered that it is bad form to use the Collector's tweezers to pluck the eyebrows, or to pick strands of hair out of skink drains. Lord knows I've tried to get away with it, but he always finds out.

Later in our marriage, I discovered that the wives of stamp collectors must be careful which newspapers they throw out when they are tidying up the place. Once, in a frenzy of house cleaning, I crumpled up a news paper that somebody had left spread out on the dining room table, and threw it in the fireplace.

Later that night, I found out that stamp collector soak off their prizes and lay them carefully between two sheets of newspaper to dry. This news paper is then spread over a flat surface like a dining room table.

For some reason, few women are stamps collectors and I know of no marriages that are welded together with stamp hinges. I tried it once. The collector bought me my very own little book, full of empty rectangles yearning to be filled with pasties. I found it a boring and picky business which rates right down there with cleaning the oven as far as excitement goes.

Yet for millions the world over, stamp collecting is a top-rated indoor sport. Why?

One reason is that philately fills the mind with unrelated nuggets of information that can be sprung on people at parties. Your average man, vis a vis a breathtaking decolletage, may be stricken mute. But not your stamp collector. He will bridge the conversational gap with "Guess who invented the pocket watch. Give up? Peter Henlein, in Germany in 1542....!!!"

My mother keeps telling me I'm lucky to be married to a stamp collector. "Look at it this way," she keeps saying. "He could be playing the horses or chasing women." I guess she's right. Stamp collecting is clean and quiet and legal and I often wish our oldest boy had stamped in his father's footsteps instead of Gene Krupa's

All things considered, I'd rather be married to a philatelist than a philanderer.

(Courtesy : American Philatelist, 1977)

STAMP NEWS

HERITAGE BUILDINGS - MUMBAI G.P.O. AND AGRA H.P.O.

12.04.13 500, 500 0.51. mill



India Post has feature some of its landmark post office buildings on postage stamps over the years. This year, India Pos! celebrates the 100 years of Mumbai G.P.O. and Agra H.P.O. buildings.

Mumbai General Post Office: The earliest records of the existence of Bombay (now Mumbai) General Post Office (G.P.O.) indicate that the post office was located in St. George Fort near Apollo Pier. The building was lost in a fire, following which the G.P.O. moved into another building built for it in 1869. In course of time, the said building became inadequate for the G.P.O. and plan to construct a new building outside the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus Station, earlier known as Victoria Terminus Railway Station, was undertaken in 1902. Jhon Begg, Consulting Architect to the Government, designed the G.P.O. building. The construction of the building was completed in March, 1913 and the G.P.O. moved into it in April, 1913.

The Mumbai G.P.O. is built in Indo-Saracenic style with a solid exterior and well ventilated interiors built in local Kurla basalt with dressings of yellow stone from Malad and white stone from Dhrangadhara.

Agra Head Post Office: Agra Head Post Office was built in 1913. It is located on the Mall Road of the beautiful cantonment area of Agra.

Agra H.P.O. building, an important landmark of Agra has two beautiful porches on both sides and a 45 feet high dome in the middle of the building. The building also finds a place in the first of Postal Heritage buildings.

Theme: India Post, Heritage, Buildings.

CHAITYA BHOOMI, MUMBAI

14.04.13 500 0.75 mill

Chaitya Bhoomi is the tribute of a grateful nation to the memory of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, popularly known as Babasaheb, who was born on 14th April, 1891 in a Mahar family at Mhow, Madhya Pradesh.

After his early education in the then Bombay, he went abroad for higher studies. On returning to India in 1923, he started a campaign aimed at annihilation of caste and reconstruction of the Indian society on the basis of equality of human beings. He stood for a united self-governing community of Indians



with special constitutional safeguards for the depressed classes. As Minister of Law and Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. Ambedkar played a leading role in the framing of the Indian Constitution. As an authority on Constitutional Law, his influence on politics, social reform, education and religion has been enormous.

On 14th October, 1956, Babasaheb embraced Buddhism. He continued the crusade for the upliftment of the downtrodden till his death on 6th December, 1956 at Delhi. His body was brought to Rajgriha at Dadar, Mumbai on the following day where his last rites were performed at a crematorium near the sea shore at Shivaji Park.

Chaitya Bhoomi was erected in 1962 at the place where his last rites were performed.

Theme: Memorials, Freedom Fighters.

HARI SINGH NALWA

30.4.13 500 0.32 mill

Hari Singh Nalwa was born in 1791 in Gujranwala, now in Pakistan, in an ordinary Khatri family.

He joined the ranks of the Khalsa at the tender age of ten and rose from a Khidmatgar to Sardar at the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in just three years' time. He earned the title 'Nalwa' for killing a tiger single-handedly with a sword while still in his teens. He soon became one of the trusted generals of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.



Hari Singh was a dauntless warrior. His conquests ultimately led to the downfall of the Afghan Saddozais-descendants of Ahmed Shah Durrani. His heroics were well recognized and he was offered the post of the Governor of Kashmir in 1820. He was also later bestowed with a jagir in Western Kashmir mountains which he held till his death. He built the town of Haripur. Today, Haripur, named after Hari Singh Nalwa, is a district and city in Pakistan.

The battle of Jamrud, fought between the Sikhs and the Afghans in 1837, was the ultimate highlight of Nalwa's career. Though Hari Singh died within hours of being grievously wounded, the mere suspicion that he might be alive kept the entire Afghan army at bay out of sheer FEAR - not just for a day or two, but for over a week, by which time reinforcements arrived from Lahore.

Theme: Personality, Sikhism, Leaders

Kiang Ladakh and Ghor Khar : Kutch

10.5.13 2000, 500 0.41 mill each

Kiang and Ghor Khar, the wild ass of Ladakh and Kutch are beautiful and fascinating creatures of the wild.



Kiang: Ladakh (Equus hemionus kiang): The Kiang or Tibetan Wild Ass is the largest of the all African and Asiatic wild asses. Its coat is reddish in summer to dark brown in winter with almost white underparts. Kiang is considered closer to a horse than ass due to its short ears, large tail tuft and broad hooves.

The habitat of the Kiang extends from Tibet, some regions in China to east Ladakh and north Sikkim in India. Kiang can run long distances at a speed of more than 50 kms per hour. Kiangs live in herds and feed upon sparsely growing sturdy grasses.

Ghor Khar: Kutch (Equus hemionus khur): The Indian Wild Ass, also called Ghor Khar, is found predominantly in the Little Rann of Kutch and its surrounding areas in Gujarat. The coat of the animal is usually sandy and may vary from reddish grey, fawn, to pale chestnut. It possesses an erect, dark mane which runs from the back of the head and along the neck followed by a dark brown stripe running along the back, to the root of the tail. It feeds on grass, leaves and fruits of plant, crop and saline vegetation.

Theme: Animals, Wild Asses

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA

24.5.13 500 0.31 mill

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is the regulator of securities market in India. Securities Market in India has a very fascinating and distinguished history. The first formal exchange, which was later known as Bombay Stock Exchange came in existence in 1875. Subsequently, many stock exchanges were set up in

different States - at Calcutta, Madras, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Indore.

With the increased pace of economy, the need for robust regulatory mechanism for developing healthy capital markets and for preventing trading malpractices was realized, which led to the establishment of SEBI in 1987-88. It started functioning in 1988. SEBI was legally empowered with the passing of the SEBI Act in 1992. SEBI conducts surveillance through its automated Integrated Market Surveillance System (IMSS) and Data Warehousing and Business Intelligence System (DWBIS) and takes regulatory action against offenders in the securities market.



Capacity building in securities market has been taken very fervently by SEBI. For this purpose, SEBI has set up a dedicated institute, namely, 'National Institute of Securities Market' (NISM). It has also launched an investor awareness campaign using print and electronic media. The Indian securities market today competes with the global peers, with NSE and BSE being ranked amongst the top 10 exchanges in the world, on various parameters. SEBI is an active member of international fora such as The International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), Financial Stability Board (FSB) and Joint Forum etc. and a signatory to the Multilateral MoUs with IOSCO for information sharing and regulatory co-operation.

Theme: Economy, Finance, Institutions, Buildings

PEERZADA GHULAM AHMAD MEHJOOR

25.6.13 500 0.31 mill

Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Mehjoor was born on 11th August, 1887 at Mitrigam, 40kms southwest of Srinagar, in Pulwama District to Peer Abdullah Shah and Sayeeda Begum. He was brought up by his father, a Moulvi by profession, and his grandmother who were both Persian and Arabic scholars.



Peerzada received his early education from his father. Later on, he was sent to Srinagar for his schooling. His father wanted him to follow his footsteps and become a Moulvi, he slipped away from the Valley in the winter of 1905 and reached Amritsar which was humming with literary activity in those days. He got ample opportunity of meeting well-known Urdu poets of the day and reciting his compositions at a number of poetic symposia,

On his return to Kashmir, Mehjoor got a job as a Patwari in the revenue department and spent nearly two years in the frontier region of Baltistan. It was here that he was able to compile his work "Safarnama-e-Baltistan" in which he describes the landscape and beauty of the place.

Mehjoor began writing Kashmiri poetry in earnest from 1914. Until the time Mehjoor appeared on the scene, Kashmiri poetry had been divided into two water tight compartments, the Persianised mystic love poems of Muslim bards and obscure devotional songs of Hindu poets written in Sanskritised diction. In contrast, Mehjoor's poetry synthesized culture and language.

Mehjoor revolutionized the sensibility of his people and was acclaimed as the National Poet of Kashmir and conferred the title of Shair-e-Kashmir. When the freedom movement gained momentum in the 1940s, he rose to the occasion and evoked nationalistic sentiment among the masses. He was unarguably a propounder of communal harmony and universal brotherhood.

The noted Kashmiri poet and social thinker breathed his last on 9th April, 1952. His body was laid to rest at Athwajan, Srinagar where a mausoleum has been built.

Theme: Personality, Poets, Literature, Freedom Fighter

(Courtesy: India Post, Information Bruchures)

THE THREE 'INVERTS

Paul Brittain

Just a few, maybe only a single example, are known of some stamps, such as the Mauritius 'Post Office' Hawaiian 'Missionaries' or the British Guiana 1c. 'black on magenta', making it easy to appreciate why the cachet of 'world's rarest' can be applied. However, in other cases, the rarity comes not from the basic stamp, but as a result of an error—such as the Swedish 3 skilling 'error of colour'.

THE 'INVERTED SWAN'

Some errors have a spectacular look, such as those that involve part of the design being inverted. One of the most famous is the so-called Western Australia 4d. 'Inverted Swan'. The quotes are used because, as is now well known, the stamp, featuring a swan within a border inscribed 'Western', 'Australia', 'Postage' and 'Four Pence', does not have its centre inverted, but an inverted frame—however, 'inverted frame' sounds much less romantic.

The first time the stamp was noted was in the collection of R U Pegg, who, in April 1863, sent it to Dr John Edward Gray of the British Museum for an opinion. None was given: Dr Gray replied that he could not understand 'how such a reversal of the swan could have occurred'. The mystery is easy to understand, as the stamp is printed in one colour as one process.

It took several years for all the questions to be answered, revealing quite an unusual story behind the production. Western Australia had ordered a quantity of 4d. stamps printed in recess in black by Perkins, Bacon and Co. It was always intended that further quantities might be produced locally, so Perkins, Bacon also supplied die printing plates, black ink, watermarked paper, and even a printing press. Indeed, before any of the 4d. stamps were put on sale, further quantities were printed locally, again by recess using the resources that Perkins, Bacon had provided. In addition, it was decided to issue 4d. and 1s. values, again printed locally but by lithography. The printing stones from which these were printed were derived from the plate that Perkins Bacon had supplied, by transferring the design, then removing the 4d. frames using acid, thus leaving just the 'swan' design, and adding new frames for either the 4d. or 1s. value. There were 60 impressions of each value built up, repeated four times, and thus the stamps were printed in sheets of 240.

The task of producing the additional values was undertaken by Horace Samson of the Surveyor General's Department, but he did not do a good job, and only 40 sheets of the 4d. were acceptable. The three values, whether printed in London or locally, were issued on 1 August 1854. Samson resigned, and Alfred Hiltman took his place. Hiltman found that the stone for die 4d. was simply not good enough for any further printing, and so went back to basics to create a new printing stone. It was at this stage that in one position of the 60 impressions of the 4d. he inserted an inverted frame: he used the new stone to print 97 sheets of the 4d. on Friday, 5 January 1955, on each sheet the error occurring four times. Later he produced two further printings of the 4d., but the error had been noticed and was corrected.

The stamp in Pegg's collection was later acquired by a schoolteacher named Morris. At the time, the only stamp dealer in Dublin was Garrard, who operated from his stationery shop, and which became the meeting place for local collectors. It was there in mid 1870s that Morris met the schoolboy collector, Vance, telling him of the stamp and disclosing that he would be prepared to sell it for £3. Soon after, Garrard introduced Vance to the Duke of Leinster, and their conversation turned to the stamp. Being told the stamp could be for sale, Duke said he was keen to own it, and gave Vance a cheque for £3. It was not easy for Vance, being so young, to cash the cheque, but eventually he did. In fact, he went even better: he persuaded Morris to sell him the stamp for £2, thus making a tidy 50 per cent profit when he passed the stamp to its new owner. The Duke was delighted with his purchase, and rewarded Vance with further stamps worth several pounds. The Duke displayed his proud possession at the London Philatelic Exhibition held in 1890.

There is a further twist to the story. When the Duke died, he bequeathed his collection to the Dublin Art Museum, but the error could not be found. It seems he had intended to swap the stamp for others, and it was only found later in a desk, along with the letter from Dr Gray.

Curiously, this error has only ever been found used, and as single examples. However, in 1937 a dealer

in the Strand found in a box of 'rubbish' a part envelope on which had been affixed two copies of the normal stamp, and two adjoining segments, one of which, albeit only a third of the stamp, clearly showed the frame-inverted.

Conclusive evidence that the error was indeed an 'inverted frame' came in 1979 when the stone came to light that had been created by Hillman comprising 60 impressions of not only the 4d. value but also the 1s.: on this stone, made up of 12 rows of five impressions of each value, could be seen, on the first stamp of the eighth row of the 4d., the inverted frame. No printed impressions were taken from the stone, but photographic reproductions were produced.

There are 14 examples of the error recorded: fortunately one of these was purchased by Tapling, and so is now in the Philatelic Collections at the British Library.

'THE INVERTED 'JENNY''



What makes the Western Australia 4d. so fascinating is the fact it is a single-colour, single-printing stamp. Much more understandable are stamps printed in two colours, where one colour is inverted. If the stamp has been printed in two colours, the likelihood is that the frame is in one colour, the central design in a second, creating a more spectacular effect if the paper is inserted upside down when just one of the colours has been printed.

The United States can boast several instances of inverted colours, but none has caught the imagination more than the 24c. airmail stamp issued on Monday 13 May 1918 and intended for use on the New York-Philadelphia-Washington airmail route inaugurated two days later. The stamp was printed in two colours, with a border in carmine, and the central design of a Curtiss 'Jenny' in blue. Because the printed sheets were larger than the packaging to be used for their despatch, the sheets were trimmed at the top and right-hand side, thereby removing the perforations. At the same time the plate numbers, printed in the right-hand margin, were also removed.

On the day after issue William Robey, based in Washington, planned to buy a sheet of 100 of the stamps, party to prepare first flight covers in conjunction with fellow collectors in New York and Philadelphia. However, his local post office had only a few copies of the stamp left, and these were badly centred, so he declined to buy. The clerk

said that further supplies were expected around midday. At 12 noon he returned, and the additional stock had arrived. He asked for a sheet, paid his \$24, inspected the sheet to ensure it was satisfactory, only to notice that the central aircraft design had been printed upside down. Furthermore the 'blue' plate number was not present, in the left sheet margin.

He asked the clerk if he could see the remaining sheets that had arrived: all were perfect. In his excitement, he had to show his 'find' to the clerk, and also to a fellow collector who worked with Robey. They both checked other post offices, but again all the stock was perfect. Clearly word of the find had been passed on, for later the same day he was approached by two postal officials, demanding the return of his stamps, but he ignored their threats, and they departed. Remaining stocks were also checked at the three places, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, where the stamps were on sale. But again no further examples of the error were found.

Robey now set about selling the stamps, which he first offered to a local dealer, refusing the suggested \$500. Another local dealer offered \$10,000, but even that was declined. Robey decided to take his sheet to New York, where he sold it for \$15,000 to a syndicate. The syndicate started to offer the stamps at \$250 each, or \$175 if from positions in the sheet where there was a straight edge. However, before any were sold, the entire sheet was purchased for \$20,000 by Colonel EHR Green, a leading collector.

Green intended to keep the sheet intact in his collection, but was persuaded to let other collectors have the joy of owning an example, and anyway, the sheet would probably be worth more if split. He decided to keep the key pieces for himself, selling the rest.

Inevitably there are stories surrounding this stamp, which might or might not be true. One is that Green 'lost' about a dozen of the errors he had retained. It has been suggested these might have been inadvertently put into a wastepaper basket, or destroyed in a fire on his yacht. It is also said that Green had a locket made for his wife, inside being an example of the error with the top cut straight from the first row of the sheet, backed by an example of the normal stamp.

No other examples of the error ever came to light. One of the errors can be seen in the Philatelic Collections of the British Library, this time in The Fitzgerald Collection.

INDIA INVERTED HEAD

The third of the famous 'inverts' comes from India, the 4a. put on sale on 15 October 1854, featuring the portrait of Queen Victoria printed in blue, within an octagonal frame in red. The printing was undertaken in lithography by Captain H L Thuillier using a press in the Surveyor-General's office in Calcutta. The printing stones were produced from copper dies engraved by a person whose name was Maniruddin.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 12, and it has been established that the red frames were printed first, then, after the sheets had dried, they were put through the press again to receive the head in blue. Clearly some sheets with the frames printed were put upside down in the press for the second colour, resulting in the head of Queen Victoria being inverted.

How many sheets were involved remains unknown, although there are about 27 examples thought to exist, including two cut to shape copies on a letter sheet sent from Bombay to Venice, which was bought by Thomas Tapling for £32 in 1890 and is now in the British Library. Part of the problem is that fakes and forgeries, plus reprints, of the error are known, and consequently for many years this error was not highly sought after, and prices remained relatively low. As with the majority of the world's rarest stamps, further examples may still be discovered.

The first time the stamp was recognised was not until January 1874, when it was included in a collection shown to the Philatelic Society, London.

Most of the examples known have been cut to the octagonal shape of the frame: very few are cut square. One of the finest examples was in fact in the collection of a schoolgirl, Miss Mary Lynch, in New Zealand, who had received the collection from an aunt in 1934. This example was sold by H R Harmer for £725 in 1954 when it was bought by Stanley Gibbons: it was shown at the international stamp exhibition held in London in 1960. In 1988 H R Harmer again had the privilege of auctioning the stamp: this time it sold for £52,800.

(Courtesy: Gibbon's Stamp News, 2011)

REFLECTIONS OF A BORN AGAIN COLLECTOR

Lan Matthews

PART 1 - THE RIP VAN WINKEL EXPERIENCE

Apparently there are many like me: that is, people (mostly men) who have not given a thought to stamp collecting since abandoning the hobby in their teens and who suddenly, around retirement age, find themselves smitten by a bug which apparently had never really gone away but simply lain dormant, waiting for its host to be triggered into a fever of new found enthusiasm. Wives are dumbfounded. The discovery of a clandestine mistress would at least be comprehensible, but stamp collecting! Unable to contain herself any longer, my wife stormed into the sanctum where I was attending to my new French acquisitions. 'And what have you learned from them?' she demanded in desperation. I could see that rational explanation was futile and all I could do was tamely mumble something about how the stamps I was examining were printed in the USA and put on sale in France in 1944 during the Liberation Period. She shook her head in disbelief and I

knew roughly what she was thinking—something along the lines of 'No amount of interest in history, geography, art, or anything else you may care to name, can justify amassing these small pieces of paper'.

A Collecting Catalyst

So what, in my case, was the trigger that set me collecting again? It was simply that I decided to sell my small boyhood collection of Australian, Canadian, and French stamps and in the act of valuing them my interest was rekindled. Almost without realizing it I found myself thinking that perhaps, as a compromise, I would hang on to my French stamps and just sell the others. Although it was very much a 'schoolboy collection' with gaps that I had hoped to fill later, I was rather impressed to find that the Australian and Canadian stamps had a catalogue value of about £150 I naively thought I might sell them for 50 or 40 per cent of their catalogue value but in the end I was reduced to offering them to a dealer for £15. He wasn't interested, so finally I gave them to a member of my local stamp club who would sell them to raise money for his favorite charity. That was my first 'reality check' and I felt rather like that well-known fictional character, Rip Van Winkel, who falls asleep for 20 years and wakes up to find out how much has changed—except in my case I had 'fallen asleep' for 50 years!

Among some of the changes that struck me were that the terms 'mint' and 'unused' had largely been replaced by 'unmounted mint' and 'mounted mint' and strange objects called Hawid strips were used to ensure that stamps remained 'unmounted mint'. When I stopped collecting there were four or five hardback Gibbons catalogues with illustrations in black and white and now there are over 20 in paperback and illustrated in colour. It amazes me to consider how many stamps of the world have been issued over the past 50 years and the ways in which collectors and dealers alike have had to adapt to this.

The nostalgia effect

Many collectors can point to a stamp or stamps which they find particularly fascinating and often this is linked to their youth or formative years as collector. Probably my favorite stamp which I owned as a child was a mint 1935 10c. black and yellow issue of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. A lion and some trees and long grass of the savannah are silhouetted against a bright yellow background which suggests sunrise. I only recently discovered that there is a £1 value in the same set which has the same design but with a background in red and which must surely suggest sunset. Still on the subject of African fauna, another of my favourite stamps was the 1947 10c. blue of French Equatorial Africa showing a rhinoceros framed by jungle vegetation and a huge coiling snake.

For some strange reason I had always carried in my mind the image of a particular 'French stamp. This 15f. issue of 1957 was certainly a good example of the high standard of French stamp design in the 1950s but for me it also illustrates how our memories can play tricks on us. The stamp, as I recalled it, depicted a simple and typically French rural scene of some pigeons on a wall or the roof of

some old building. I don't think I even owned this stamp and it was probably in a friend's collection. The scene reminded me of something which as a child I had not yet experienced but which I had apparently imagined perfectly—the heat of a summer day and some old farm or chateau hidden deep in the French countryside. I could almost hear the sporadic buzz of a fly, clucking of a hen or distant cooing of doves. When I took up collecting again one of the first things I did was to look up this stamp in my Gibbons catalogue. Although I recognized it immediately it was not quite what I had remembered. It showed a solitary pigeon perched on a loft and bore the inscription 'colombophilie' (pigeon-fancying), I had carried a picture of the stamp in my mind, but my imagination had altered it and superimposed subsequent memories of my youthful wanderings in the Dordogne. One thing I had remembered correctly was the colour, which is listed in the catalogue as 'blue, indigo, and blackish purple'. To this I would add: 'A miniature work of an and indefinable poetry' and what is more, it only cost me 20pl.

Finally, I am reminded that pigeons have played an important role in postal history* During the Siege of Paris in die Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) pigeons as well as manned and unmanned balloons were used to take messages out of the besieged city. Of course, I would love to own one of these highly sought balloon post covers, but that may have to wait some time. In the meantime, I'm happy with my miniature works of art.

PART 2 - WHAT MAKES A STAMP-COLLECTOR?

When I retired and began collecting stamps again after an absence of about 50 years, I was forced to accept that I had always been a closet collector, I would feel an irresistible compulsion to examine sets of stamps if I chanced upon them in a shop window or displayed on some indoor market stand. After a furtive glance to see if my wife had noticed, I would nonchalantly sidle towards those small objects of my fascination, making sure not to linger over them for too long. Some years ago my wife took a photo of me gazing intently into a shop window in Paris—it was only recently that I pointed out to her that it was in fact a stamp shop.

I remember a classmate in junior school who told me that his mother had scolded him for saving up £10 of pocket money to buy a British stamp—£10 was a lot of pocket money in 1954. I also remember with guilt another classmate, Brian, whom I invited home to see my stamps. Perhaps sensing his disappointment in my collection, I then pointed to a set of encyclopedias on the sitting room bookshelf and bragged that these were albums containing my main collection and one day, but not now, I would show them to him. This went on for weeks with me unable to back down from my deception and Brian driven to distraction with desire to see this philatelic treasure revealed. In the end Stamp collecting certainly provided a great boost to my general knowledge and curiosity about the world. At the age of ten I may not have been able to build a model aeroplane, but I could distinguish between Chinese and Japanese calligraphy (although I couldn't read it), I knew that India had a Five Year Plan (although I didn't know what it was) and I could recognise the Shah of Iran and General

Franco (which might have been handy if I had chanced upon either of them strolling around the suburbs of Wolverhampton!). I am sure that when I sat in bed as a 14-year-old, sticking stamps into my album, I was also helping myself to cope with all those anxieties about exams and the future" which gather like a poisonous miasma around the bedroom doors of so many teenagers.

Inward and outward journeys

Many of the articles we read in stamp magazines are concerned with fine details and variations as well as taking a broader approach, such as thematics, I call it the 'inward' or 'outward' approach to collecting, and many of us like to practice both approaches. A book published by the Hellenic Philatelic Society entitled *Greek Rural Postmen and their Cancellation Numbers* is probably an example of the 'inward' approach, but it recently gained some wider publicity by winning the Bookseller Prize for the oddest book title over the past 30 years that this annual prize has existed. If it had not been for this 'Oddest Book Tide' award, how many of us would have spent the rest of our lives without giving a single thought to the world of Greek rural postmen? Now we can let our imaginations run free. And what potential for another Sherlock Holmes story: 'The Case of the Peloponnesian Postmark' in which Holmes is able to demonstrate that an olive-oil importer who murdered his business partner whilst on a trip to Greece could not have been in Athens when he claimed to have been because the cancellation number on a letter he sent to his Greek agent was not used in Athens.

Perhaps this is not so far-fetched as there was a real life case where a cancellation became a crucial piece of evidence—the famous trial of Madeleine Smith in 1857. Madeleine Smith was accused of murdering her lover with arsenic. To support its case the prosecution relied on a letter to her lover in which Smith referred to a meeting on the previous Sunday. This was the Sunday when Smith's lover was violently sick after the returned to his lodgings, but the date on the Glasgow postwork was illegible and the prosecution could not tell whether it was dated on the 2nd or die 22nd of die month. Madeleine Smith was acquitted and the type of duplex postmark in question became known to philatelists as the 'Madeleine Smith' cancellation.

The philatelic psyche

For an excellent insight into the 'philatelic psyche' one could do no better than to read "The Error World" by Simon Garfield. The theme of stamp collecting is interwoven with the author's childhood and subsequent life events, notably the break-up of his marriage. Sadly, he is forced to sell his extensive collection of Great Britain errors to help pay for his divorce, but the book has a positive ending because he decides to take up stamp-collecting again, albeit on a more modest scale. I had been half-expecting him to end by suggesting how well-balanced he now was by being able to cast off his collecting habit—a bit like those blokes at the stamp club who like to say they don't really collect stamps anymore—just interesting postmarks and letters, etc. So hats off to Simon Garfield for staying true to his inner stamp-collector which he had examined from every possible angle but, like me, failed to eradicate.

So what are my conclusions from all this? First, as has been said many times before, there is a strong link between enjoyment of the hobby in one's early years and continuation or resumption in later years. Second, stamp-collecting is fascinating for many and complex reasons. Third, it is also very relaxing, mainly because for the most part (and I stress 'for the most part') it is also fairly undemanding. In his memoirs, Winston Churchill recounts how he flew to America for a meeting with President Franklin D Roosevelt. This was at a critical time in World War II. After a long meeting, Churchill sat and relaxed with a brandy and cigar while Roosevelt attended to his stamp collection. Churchill remarks that for a short time Roosevelt was able to forget the cares of state and lose himself in the pleasure of his stamp collection.

(Courtesy : Gibbous stamp Magazine, 2011)

US POSTMASTERS' PROVISIONALS, 1845-1847

Peter Martin

After the introduction of America's uniform postal rates, in 1845, but before the Post Office Department issued its first general issue stamps of 1 July 1847, several US cities produced what are today called Postmasters' Provisionals. These early US stamps, which were produced by individual postmasters and were valid only in their local areas, are now some of the most sought after items in American philately.

Great Britain's Penny Black, released 6 May 1840, is universally recognized as the world's first postage stamp. Brazil and the Swiss cantons of Geneva and Zurich were next to issue their first stamps in 1843. The United States and Mauritius followed in 1847 and France and Belgium were added to the list of postage stamp issuing countries in 1849. By 1860 about 85 countries or entities had issued stamps. In the United States, the first stamps were the 5c. and 10c. general issues of 1 July 1847. The stamps (SG 1/2, Scott 1/2) feature Benjamin Franklin, the country's first postmaster general, and George Washington, the nation's first president.

But before the Post Office Department issued these stamps and received a monopoly on postage stamp issuing, there were several cities that produced what are today called Postmasters' Provisionals. All are rare and command a hefty premium when they appear on the market. Values in the Stanley Gibbons North America Catalogue range from £325 to £270,000 with most in the four- and five-figure range.

Fig 1 The 5c. New York Postmaster's Provisional with red 'A C M.' initials (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution, National Postal Museum)

Some background is in order. Prior to 1845 US postage rates were very high and their complexity made

them difficult for the public, and even many postmasters, to comprehend. The prevailing custom was for mail to be delivered to the addressee before the Post Office Department was paid for its service. This system was cumbersome and did not encourage the use of the mails.

The Act of 3 March 1845, which became effective on 1 July of that year, finally provided for uniform postage rates that were considerably lower and easy to understand. Once the act went into effect, a letter could be mailed up to 300 miles for 5c. per half ounce. Letters travelling more than 300 miles were charged at the rate of 10c. per half ounce.

The new act did not provide for the government to issue postage stamps but it did allow individual postmasters to issue stamps that would be valid only at their local post office.

A small number of postmasters pursued this opportunity and their stamps, known to collectors as the Postmasters' Provisionals, served the same purpose as the Penny Black: they allowed the postal patron the opportunity to purchase the stamps in advance and then attach them to the letter, which could be deposited at the post office day or night.

The Postmasters' Provisionals' place in American philately is historically significant and the formation of a collection of these early stamps is one of the most challenging areas of advanced philately.

NEW YORK CITY. THE FIRST POSTMASTERS' PROVISIONAL

The first postmaster to take advantage of the new law was New York Postmaster Robert Hunter Morris, who took office on 21 May 1845. Upon the assumption of his duties, he quickly proceeded with plans to issue an adhesive stamp. While Morris was a forward-thinking individual, he also figured that a stamp would impress his superiors in Washington, DC, while also adding to his salary. During that time, a postmaster's compensation was tied to the receipts of his post office.

Morris asked Postmaster General Cave Johnson to allow him to issue stamps for prepayment of letters going through his office and when his request was approved Morris contracted with Rawdon, Wright & Hatch of New York, to print a five-cent stamp bearing an image of George Washington.

Rawdon, Wright & Hatch became one of the most prominent printing and engraving firms in nineteenth-century America. The company's artistry set the standard for succeeding US printing and engraving firms. The 1858 merger of an expanded Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson with seven other firms created the American Bank Note Company with RWH&E holding the largest share in the new company (23.9 per cent).

Fig 2 (below left) Exterior view of the Dutch Reform Church at Nassau and Liberty Streets that became the New York City Post Office in 1.844 Fig 3 (below right) Interior view of the New York City Post Office showing clerks

sorting the mail. The postmaster's office was located behind the eagle, a spot that allowed him to see everything that was going on

US POSTMASTERS' PROVISIONAL'S

Between 12 July 1845 and 7 January 1847 RW&H made 18 deliveries of sheets to the New York Post Office, for a total of 3590 sheets of 40, or 143,600 stamps.

The stamps were printed in a variety of wove papers varying in thickness from pelure to thick and in colour from grey to bluish and blue. Initially, a thick brown gum was used, succeeded by a thin white transparent gum.

The 12 major and minor Scott Catalogue listings for the New York provisional reflect the specialized classification of paper colours and initial types. A census of this stamp indicates there are about 5500 surviving copies, of which 500 are uncancelled.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the New York provisional is that its success demonstrated the efficacy of adhesive postage stamps to the public and to Congress, paving the way for the 1847 general issue.

The New York City experience quickly motivated ten postmasters in other US cities and towns to issue their own stamps. An overview of these ten Postmasters' Provisionals follows.

Sc. New York Postmaster's Provisional with red grid and 'Paid' markings on a cover to Providence, Rhode Island (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution, National Postal Museum)

The die used for Washington's head was taken from a medallion using a famous Gilbert Stuart portrait that was being used on contemporary banknotes. It had a small flaw, a line extending from the corner of the mouth down to the chin, however, that was corrected for the stamps. The engravers added a dignified frame and added the words 'New York,' 'Post Office' and 'Five Cents.'

The stamps (SG 55/65, Scott 9X1/9X3, Fig 1) were printed in sheets of 40 with eight horizontal rows of five. The first shipment of 1200 stamps arrived at the main New York City Post Office on Saturday 12 July 1845 but it appears that the stamps were not placed on sale until Monday 14 July.

On the day the stamps were received, Morris wrote to the postmasters in Albany, NY; Boston, Mass.; Philadelphia, Pa.; and Washington, DC, telling them that he had produced a stamp that he sold for 5c. and enclosing a stamp specimen.

The New York Post Office had just moved from the rotunda on the north-east corner of City Hall Park to the former Dutch Reform Church building at Liberty and Nassau Streets (Figs 2 and 3) and the stamps were issued there and at the branch in the Merchants Exchange Building on Wall Street, the same building in which Rawdon, Wright and Hatch had their plant and printed them.

When the stamps were first put on sale they were sold as issued. After a few days, to prevent the misuse of the stamps, Morris started to initial each stamp with his 'R H M.' initials in red ink. Soon thereafter, he delegated this duty to Alonzo Castle Monson, a postal clerk who was also his brother-in-law. Monson applied his 'ACM.' initials, also in red ink (Fig 1), and most of the New York provisional's are found with his initials.

Later yet, red circular grid and 'PAID' hand stamps were used (Fig 4), -but these are considerably scarcer.

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Alexandria, Virginia, was a major colonial port city that was ceded to the District of Columbia in 1791 and ceded back to Virginia by the US Congress on 6 July 1846. In September 1846 the issue was put up for a resident's vote and approved, but it was not until March 1847 that the Virginia General Assembly enacted the recession.

The Alexandria Post Office, with Daniel Bryan as postmaster, was actually part of the District of Columbia when the provisional stamps were used before March 1847.

All documented examples of Alexandria provisional stamps (SG 1/2, Scott 1X1/1X2, Fig 5) are cut to shape. The round stamp features a circle of asterisk-like rosettes surrounding 'Alexandria *Post Office*' with a 'PAID 5' in the centre. There are two types. One has 40 rosettes, the other has 39 rosettes. The stamps are black on buff and all catalogue at least \$100,000.

There also is a unique example on blue paper. Known as the 1847 5c. Alexandria Blue Boy (Fig 6), the stamp is on a cover addressed to Richmond Virginia that contained a love letter that was supposed to be destroyed. It is one of the rarest items in the world. In 1981, the Blue Boy sold for \$1 million.

Morris figured that a stamp would impress Ms superiors, while also adding to his salary.

Fig 5 (above) A cut-to-shape 5c. Alexandria, Virginia, Postmasters Provisional. Fig 6 (right) The unique 5c. Alexandria Blue Boy Postmaster's Provisional on a cover addressed to Richmond, Virginia

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

Fig 7 Annapolis, Maryland, Postmaster's Provisional 5 PAID

Little has been written about the Annapolis, Maryland, Postmaster's Provisional. Postmaster Martin F Revell issued a 5c. envelope and letter sheet (SG 5, Scott 2XU1, Fig 7) showing a red, circular design with 'Post Office Annapolis Md.' surrounding an eagle. A '5 PAID' hand stamp in red or blue was also applied. The provisional is known on two sizes of envelope.

The circular design in blue, without the numeral or 'PAID' hand stamp, is known to have been used as a postmark.

The Annapolis provisional is extremely rare and is valued at, £270,000 in the Gibbons United States Catalogue.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Baltimore Postmaster, James Madison Buchanan, a successful lawyer and prominent politician, was appointed to his office on 8 April 1845. When the new postal rates were announced, he anticipated a significant increase in mail volume passing through his post office.

He was correct. The first day saw a huge increase in mail volume and on the second day there were 1500 more letters deposited than on the first day. This situation not only created more work for his clerks but also made for congestion in the post office.

To help rectify the situation, in early July Buchanan issued envelopes bearing his hand stamped signature and 'PAID' and rate markings. The envelopes (SG 10/30; Scott 3X1/3X4, 3XU1/3XU4, Fig 8) were prepared in two denominations, in stamp and hand stamp formats, by postal employees prior to sale to the public.

While neither the printer nor the printing process have been documented, it is known that the adhesive stamps were printed from a plate of 12 (2x6) containing nine 5c. stamps and three 10c. stamps. Within each boxed rectangle were the signature of James M Buchanan and the denomination.

The 15 July 1845 edition of the Baltimore American featured this news item:

'Post Office Stamped Envelopes—We learn that the Postmaster of this city, with laudable desire to promote the convenience of businessmen and others, has caused to be prepared five and ten cent envelopes, with which letters may be mailed at any hour of the day or night without the trouble attendant upon paying postage at the window, waiting until the office is opened, etc. These envelopes may be procured at the office from the clerks; sixteen of the five cents are furnished for a dollar. We observe that this system has been adopted in some of the Eastern States.'

While the envelopes were placed on sale in July, the earliest documented use is a buff envelope dated 7 September.

The colour of the paper and the inks used to prepare them varied over time. The 5c. envelopes were produced on manila, buff, white, salmon and grey paper with manila the most common. All 10c. envelopes are rare with manila and buff the most frequently seen. Only one 10c. on salmon paper is recorded.

Values in the Gibbons Catalogue range from £5500 to £80,000.

BOSCAWEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE PAID

Fig 9 Boscawen, New Hampshire, Postmaster's Provisional

Boscawen is small a town in Merrimack County, New Hampshire. Some time around 1846, Postmaster Worcester Webster issued a provisional hand stamp.

The hand stamp was an adaptation of a postmark and simply read 'PAJD/5/CENTS,' typeset in blue on a yellowish paper (SG 35, Scott 4X1, Fig 9). Only one documented example has been identified. It is uncanceled and on a cover with manuscript postal markings. It currently lists in the SG United States Catalogued £270,000.

BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

Fig 10 Position ten of the 5c. Brattleboro, Vermont, Postmaster's Provisional (SC 40) (Courtesy Robert A Siegel Auction Galleries)

Brattleboro Postmaster Frederick N Palmer issued his provisional some time in 1846. The exact date is not known because in later accounts neither the postmaster nor the printer could recollect the approximate date. Based upon a surviving folded letter dated 27 August 1846, the best estimate seems to be in mid-summer 1846.

The Brattleboro provisional was engraved by Thomas Chubbuck of Brattleboro, who also was the printer. The stamp was printed in black on a thick buff paper from a plate of ten (5x2) with the engraver's name below the position eight stamp. There remains a question about whether 500 stamps or 500 sheets (5000) stamps were printed.

The small, rectangular stamp (SG 40, Scott 5X1, Fig 10) features the postmaster's manuscript 'F N P' initials within a frame surround by 'Brattleboro VT. P.O. 5 Cents.' Palmer applied the gum himself with a camel-hair brush.

About 35 stamps, on and off cover, have been documented. A single used stamp catalogues for £11,000 in the Gibbons Catalogue (£23,000 unused) while a stamp on cover is valued at £32,000.

Fig 11 The Lockport, New York, Postmaster's Provisional

LOCKPORT, NEW YORK

Lockport is a small city in Niagara County, New York, in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area. Its name is derived from a set of Erie Canal locks within the city.

Fig 8 A 5c. Baltimore Postmaster's Provisional on white paper (SC 10). The cover, which is addressed to Port Tobacco, Maryland, bears a blue 'Baltimore Md. Jan 21' (1847) circular date stamp and 1 matching 'Paid' hand stamp (Courtesy Robert A Siegel Auction Galleries)

In 1846 Postmaster Hezekiah W Scovell produced a red double oval hand stamp (SG 45, Scott 6X1, Fig 11) with 'LOCKPORT NY' in the outer oval. A separate red

'PAID' and a black manuscript '5' are in the centre oval.

Only one example on a buff cover has been documented, although there is another cover with two small fragments that has been identified. The documented cover currently is valued at £270,000 in the SG Catalogue.

MILLBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

Millbury is a town in Worcester County, in south central Massachusetts. First settled in 1716, Millbury has a long history as a New England mill town, from which its name was derived.

In 1846, Postmaster Asa H Waters produced the Millbury provisional (SG 50, Scott 7X1, Fig 12). It was printed from a woodcut, singly on a hand press. The stamp features an image of what is believed to be President George Washington centred in a triple circle with 'POST OFFICE***PAID 5 Cts.***' in the second circle.

Printed in black on bluish wove paper, it is known cancelled with a straight line 'PAID' and a red circular 'MILBURY, MS.,' date in centre. The stamp is valued at £46,000 used, \$120,000 mint and \$110,000 on cover in the SG United States Catalogue.

NEW HAVEN CONNECTICUT

Fig 13 The New Haven, Connecticut, Postmaster's Provisional handstamp

The New Haven, Connecticut, Postmaster from 1844 to 1849 was Edward A Mitchell who used a brass hand stamp to make prepaid envelopes for local customers. The envelopes were made by impressing the brass die into the upper right corner.

The hand stamp (SG 55/58, Scott 8XU1/8XU4, Fig 13) was produced in 1845. The design, engraved by Augustus E Lines, features a truncated double-line frame surrounding the words 'POST OFFICE/NEW HAVEN, CT/5/PAJD/_PM.' Mitchell signed 'E.A. Mitchell' in a variety of coloured inks in die space provided.

Since customers would bring envelopes to his office for stamping, a variety of envelopes were used. Examples of cut to shape and cut squares are known for wo issues but each of the on-cover listings is for unique examples. The Gibbons catalogue values for the hand stamp on complete envelopes range from £95,000 to £110,000.

Reprints of the hand stamp were made in different colours during 1871-74, 1923 and 1932 before the hand stamp was given to the New Haven Colony Historical Society

Fig 1 4 A complete sheet of 1 2 of the 5c. and 10c. Providence, Rhode Island Postmaster's Provisional (SC 71a) (Courtesy Robert A Siegel)

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Providence is the capital and most populous city in Rhode Island and was one of the first cities established in the United States. In 1846, Providence had a population of 36,000 and the post office was a distributing office that served about 300,000 people in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. More than 80,000 letters were processed each quarter by the post office.

With that kind of volume, Postmaster Welcome B Sayles, who was appointed in 1845, had good reason to create a Postmaster's Provisional. In the summer of 1846 Sayles ordered a copper plate from George W Babcock, who was considered the best engraver in the city.

Originally, the plate was supposed to have 12x5c. and 4x10c. stamps making the sheet face value 551 but this was changed to 11x5c. and 1x10c. to approximate the expected usage.

The stamps (SG 70/71, Scott 10X1/10X2, Fig 14) were printed on hard, thin greyish handmade paper by Henry A Hidden & Co., a firm that had the best printing equipment in Providence. The printer completed his work on 26 August 1846 and delivered the plate and printed stamps, in five bundles of 300 sheets each (16,500 5c. stamps and 1500 10c. stamps), to Postmaster Sayles.

The stamps were delivered without gum so Assistant Postmaster Robert H Barton gummed the sheets from two packages (600 sheets). The gum penetrated the paper enough to give it the familiar creamy tint.

The first day of sale was Monday 24 August with record sales but the earliest documented use currently is 25 August. Total sales of the Providence Postmaster's Provisional were 6184 5c. stamps and 548 10c. stamps. Compared to the other Postmasters' Provisional's, the Providence stamps are the most readily attainable, with catalogue values starting at just £325.

Reprints in different colours were made from the original plate in 1898. All were produced without gum.

ST LOUIS, MISSOURI

The only provisionals not issued by an East Coast state were produced in St Louis, Missouri. John M Wimer served the mid-western gateway city of St Louis as postmaster, alderman and mayor and, in 1845, he had his own provisional stamps printed.

The basic design of the St Louis provisional stamps (SG 75/82, Scott 11X1/11X8, Figs 15, 16 and 17), two bears holding the state coat of arms, was chosen to symbolize Missourians' rugged durability. The bears stand on a ribbon bearing the inscription SALUSDOPUH SUPREMA LEX ESTO, meaning 'let the people's welfare be the supreme law.'

The St Louis 'Bears' engraving is one of the most elaborate of all US Postmasters' Provisional's.

On 5 November 1845 the Missouri Republican contained the following notice: 'LETTER STAMPS. Mr. Wimer, the postmaster, has prepared a set of letter stamps, or rather marks, to be put upon letters, indicating that the postage has been paid. In this he has copied after the plan adopted by the postmaster of New York and other cities. These stamps are engraved to represent the Missouri Coat of Arms, and are five and ten cents. They are so prepared that they may be stuck upon a letter like a wafer and will prove a great convenience to merchants and all those having many letters to send post paid, as it saves all trouble of paying at the post-office. They will be sold as they are sold in the East, viz.: Sixteen five-cent stamps and eight ten-cent stamps for a dollar. We would recommend merchants and others to give them a trial.'

One week later on 12 November, the same paper published a follow-up announcement:

'POST-OFFICE STAMPS. Mr. Wimer, the postmaster, requests us to say that he will furnish nine ten-cent stamps and eighteen five-cent stamps for one dollar, the difference being required to pay for the printing of the stamps.'

The second announcement likely was published to amend the number of stamps sold for a dollar from 'sixteen' to 'eighteen' for the 5c. and 'eight' to 'nine' for the 10c, which corresponds to 90c. in stamps for one dollar in money.

The 'Bears' were printed from an engraved copper plate comprising six subjects arranged in two vertical rows of three. The original plate was made by J M Kershaw, a local engraver and owner of the Western Card & Seal Engraving Establishment. Not having any means of mechanical reproduction he had to cut each design separately by hand. Consequently, each stamp differs from every other stamp on the plate.

The plate was altered twice and the states of the plate (1,2 and 3) roughly correspond to the papers used (greenish, grey-lilac and bluish pelure), so there were three printings.

First printings of these stamps were issued in denominations of 5c. and 10c. in black on greenish-grey wove paper. They were printed in two vertical rows with three 5c stamps in the left row and three 10c. in the right. In 1846, a 20c. value was introduced to cover the double rate on a letter going more than 300 miles. The denomination was created by changing the 5c. values on the plate to 20c. This 20c. denomination plate was later changed back to the 5c value.

A second printing of the three imperforate values was issued in 1846 on grey-lilac paper, and a third printing was introduced later that year on bluish paper.

The earliest documented use of any St Louis 'Bears' stamp is on a cover postmarked 13 November (1845). The stamp remainders on hand when their use was discontinued, as well as the plate, were lost with Wimer's other possessions when a Mississippi boat sank during the Civil War.

SG Catalogue values for these stamps range from £4500 to £70,000.

The end of an era

The Postmasters' Provisional's era ended when the Act of Congress of 3 March 1847, authorised the postmaster general to issue government stamps to satisfy the postal rates. The first government stamps, the 5c Benjamin Franklin and 10c. George Washington, were distributed on 1 July 1847, making the Postmasters' Provisional stamps invalid.

Celebrities of the stamp world

Following the introduction of the Penny Black in 1840, countries around the world began issuing their own stamps to pre-pay postage. In some countries the need for stamps came years, before official examples could be produced. This resulted in the introduction of* provisional stamps, often produced by local postmasters, to fill the growing need for postage stamps. One such postmaster was William Bennett Perot who produced what is now one of Bermuda's rarest stamps.

BERMUDA

The Postmaster of Bermuda's capital, Hamilton, from 1818 to 1862 was William Bennett Perot (appointed on 5 November 1818 when he was 27 years old). As part of his duties he was required to deliver all internal mail, whether received from passing ships or sent internally, being entitled to retain the charges levied. Apparently, he would walk around Hamilton carrying in his top hat the letters to be delivered, which he had carefully pre-arranged so that at each place he called he would doff his hat, and there was the appropriate letter to be handed over. A local Act of 1842 set the charges at 1d. for every ounce, following a public outcry since only 1d. was being charged in Great Britain. From the following year Perot started to receive an annual salary (initially £50) in addition to any postage money received, which in 1843 amounted to £25 14s 3d. Clearly reasonable use was made of the postal system: the records for 1843 show that over 9000 items were sent from Hamilton to Bermuda's second largest town of St George, which was the original capital.

The principle was fairly straightforward: anyone wishing to send an item would take it to the post office, and hand over the required charge. The post office was in a house owned by Perot, and it is said he preferred to spend most of the day pottering in his garden. When the office was not open, there was a box in which the mail, together with the cost of postage, could be left. However, Perot often found that insufficient money was in the box, but he was still obliged to handle all the mail deposited.

DIY stamps?

It was apparently the idea of James Bell Heyl that Perot should produce his own 'stamps': Heyl owned a chemist shop as part of the post office, and was possibly aware of stamps that had already been produced by other countries. The public could buy these stamps in advance, and affix them to any mail left in the box; Heyl would call

Perot from his garden when customers arrived, or could sell the 'stamps' if Perot was not around. If a letter were posted without one of the 'stamps' it would be regarded as unpaid.

Perot adapted one of the circular handstamps he had been sent from London, with 'HAMILTON' across the top, 'BERMUDA' around the base, and the year, then 1848, across the centre: he removed the remaining date plugs. He now made impressions in black ink on a sheet of paper. It is believed, but not proved, that there were 12 impressions to each sheet, arranged in two columns of six. It is also not certain whether the sheets were gummed. On each impression, he wrote 'One Penny' above the year, and his signature below. It seems that Perot produced further quantities as demand necessitated. He did not provide any form of cancellation—the fact that one of the 'stamps' had been affixed to a letter was sufficient. During the following year, 1849, the colour of the ink used was changed to red.

The philatelic world was unaware of these 'stamps' until 1897 when a collector from Bermuda discovered three examples. One, in red dated 1854, was on a cover which he sent to a firm of stamp dealers in Bath. The item was treated with suspicion and returned to its owner. Subsequently the cover was bought by Baron Philipp de la Renotiere de Ferrary. The next find was an example in black dated 1849: an Englishman discovered it on a letter while working in Bermuda.

Of the other examples that have come to light, only one other is still on a piece of the original letter: the "rest are off cover and have mainly been cut to the circular shape of the 'stamp', often encroaching on some of the letters.

So far, examples have been recorded as follows: three in black on bluish grey paper, dated 1848, including an example still on its letter, and one in the Royal Philatelic Collection; two in black on bluish grey paper, dated 1849, including the example from the second 'find', still on a piece of the original letter; three in red on thick white paper, dated 1853, including one in The Royal Philatelic Collection; two in red on bluish wove paper, dated 1854, including the first example discovered that was on cover and one in The Royal Philatelic Collection and one in red on bluish wove paper dated 1856.

PEROT'S SECOND TYPE

Even more surprising is the fact that it was not until 1946 that a second type of Perot 'stamp' was discovered. This lime die handstamp that Perot used was a crowned double-circle inscribed 'PAID AT HAMILTON BERMUDA' applied in red on blue laid paper. The examples known were all used in March 1861, but have no written denomination or signature, although it is assumed the value was 1d. There is a form of cancellation, a cross produced by a pen, but as the cross appears entirely on the 'stamp' and is not tied to the known covers, there is no way of telling whether it was applied before or after the 'stamp' was affixed.

Of the five examples known of this second type, two are on cover, two are single items but with the 'cross', while the fifth is without the 'cross': it is assumed that this fifth example is unused.

After Perot

Perot took some leave in 1852 and during the time his duties were undertaken by his assistant, Robert Ward, who later, in June 1862, took over from Perot as Postmaster.

Two 'stamps' have been found, identical to Perot's second type, but on cream paper with a 'cross' in blue pencil. It is known that Ward used blue pencil to cancel items, and as both examples have pieces of blue paper, from an envelope or letter, affixed to the back, it is thought these might be provisionals produced by Ward. However, in the opinion of some, it still remains conjecture.

MEANWHILE, AT ST GEORGE

While the capital of Bermuda was now Hamilton and no longer St George (or sometimes referred to as St George's), when a postmaster was appointed for St George in 1818 he was given the title of Deputy Postmaster General at St Georges, regarded as a deputy to the Postmaster General in London, and thus of higher status and with a greater salary than the postmaster in Hamilton.

The Postmaster of St George until his death in 1853 was James Taylor. He was helped by his two nephews, Thomas Thies and James Henry Thies. Thomas was appointed to succeed his uncle, and from September 1859 became officially known as Postmaster-General of Bermuda. Sadly he died on August 31, 1860, aged just 30, and was succeeded by his younger brother James.

It was James who created the provisionals for St George. It is said he took more care over the production than had Perot, drawing rules on a sheet of buff paper before striking in each rectangle in red an impression of his handstamp reading 'PAID/AT/ST GEORGE'S BERMUDA'. The first record of the Thies 'stamp' appeared in Z899, although at first its authenticity was doubted.

Five examples of this 'stamp' are known, used between 4 July 1860 and January 1863, two on cover.

Visitors to Bermuda can still see the building used by William Perot for the post office at Par-la-Ville which houses the Bermuda Natural History Museum. Perot's post office was featured on the 6d. definitive issued in 1962, while the first Perot provisional has been shown on the three stamps issued in 1949 to mark the centenary, on the 1d. and 4d. definitive of 1953, and on the set issued in 1930 to mark the centenary of the death of Sir Rowland Hill. In 2008 a set of four stamps showing the Perot provisionals was issued to celebrate the 160th anniversary of their introduction.

(Courtesy : Gibbons Stamp News, 1981)

POST MARKS OF BRITISH PAQUEBOTS

Harry Hawkes

PART 2 (Continued from April-June 2013)

IV. ENGLAND

Bristol. There has been a big post-war reduction in the number of passenger-carrying ships calling at Bristol and today most vessels calling are cargo only. Some cargo vessels carry a limited number of passengers, notably the Bristol City Line running to Canada and the U.S.A. There are also rare appearances by cruise ships, though they tend to stay in Walton Anchorage, some distance away. These letters, together with all ships' mail handed over at Avonmouth are taken to Bristol head office.

The rubber handstamp (Fig. 17) is Studd's A4 and has lasted well for it was certainly there in 1929 and possibly earlier. It is known struck in violet, red and black inks.

The machine mark (Fig. 16) could be Studd's B2 but his illustration is poorly drawn if this is so. Post-war examples of this mark are rare indeed. Brixham. Although Brixham handles quite a number of letters annually, almost all this mail comes from ships which pass rather than call. P & O liners homeward bound from Australia pick up their pilot at Brixham. The boat taking him out to the liner returns to port with the ship's mail which is speedily cancelled and sorted at Brixham while the liner is still on her way to dock at London.

Both the machine mark (Fig. 18) and the much scarcer handstamp (Fig. 19) are applied at Brixham, despite the fact that it is not a head office—it comes administratively under Torquay's head postmaster.

Chelmsford. This straight line omnibus British rubber stamp (Fig. 43) is kept at Chelmsford head office in the unlikely event of ship mail being brought ashore at either Maldon or Burnham-on-Crouch. The only ships using Maldon are eel-fishing vessels from Holland and a few timber and grain boats arriving from other British coastal ports and the Continent. Burnham-on-Crouch has an even more unlikely paquebot potential. This particular mark has become known as the Maldon paquebot mark because it was there, in 1955, that it made its sole public appearance. Several covers bearing Finnish stamps were put ashore from the timber vessel, s.s. Maud Thorden and handed in at Maldon post office. The Chelmsford mark was sent to cancel them in violet ink. I have been unable to trace any of these covers and Fig. 43 is of a specimen strike, in violet. Chelmsford head office, confirming they still hold the mark, added: "It was last used at Maldon in 1955. . . . There is, however, no call for its current use."

Dover. Fig. 20 is the one British paquebot mark which is always struck in red. Dover head office says this is tradition and no one knows why black or violet inks are never used. Another odd thing is that this mark appears on ship mail from such places as the Aegean and Adriatic. The explanation here appears to be that there are certain foreign ports which accept ship mail bearing British adhesives but forward them in bulk, without postmarking them, to be dealt with at a U.K. port of entry, such as Dover where the paquebot stamp is used to cancel the stamps. Folkestone. About 10,000 items a year are postmarked with Fig. 21 and almost all of them bear French or British stamps. These are letters handed to the Purser or Mail Officer of the cross-Channel steamers en route from Calais or Boulogne to Folkestone. British Rail (Southern Region), infer that the system applies only to French boats. They write "No such system applies to our cross-Channel ships. All mail carried is placed on board in mail bags and these are not opened until received by the town post office at the English port".

Covers bearing French stamps post-marked "Calais Maritime" and addressed to England, are known with the Folkestone paquebot mark. It seems probable that certain French items for England travel faster by being post-marked at Calais and handed in on the mail boat. At Folkestone the paquebot mark would be added to show that the letter came from a ship, then it would be sorted in the normal way. Most impressions are in violet ink.

Grays. Surprisingly little ship mail is dealt with considering Tilbury and its docks come within the Grays area. An official at Grays head office commented: "I must agree that we very rarely use the stamp. . . . The volume of mail posted on board incoming vessels is relatively small and it is often posted in pillar boxes adjacent to the docks, in which case, of course, we cannot identify it as ship's mail. This particularly happens when vessels dock in the evening or on Sundays."

The official added that he thought the mark (Fig. 22) had been in use for a considerable number of years and "was probably transferred to this office (Grays) when the office at Tilbury ceased to handle mails in 1931". Only one stamp is held.

Since 1951, examples have been re-corded in red, black and blue. In some cases it has cancelled the stamps and in others o placed alongside the stamps which have received the normal Grays cancellation.

Harwich. A tremendous amount of mail passes through Harwich but most of it goes direct to London in sealed bags and only a small proportion receives the paquebot marking. This is mail posted on board ships making the Hook of Holland—Harwich crossing. Avalon, Amsterdam and Arnhem are the British Rail (Eastern Region) ships on this run while the Zeeland Steamship Company uses Koningin Wilhelmina, Koningin Emma and Prinsin Beatrix.

It always has been assumed that one mark only was held at Harwich and differences in size were attributed to distortion of the rubber stamp being applied unevenly. There are, however, two similar, marks which are quite

distinct when examined carefully. Harwich post office confirm this.

Handstamp No. 1 (Fig. 23) is well-worn and bigger.
Handstamp No. 2 (Fig. 24) is cleaner and neater.

Both marks have been struck in various colours and Studd's type A 12a is handstamp No. 2 which appears to have been first used in 1951.

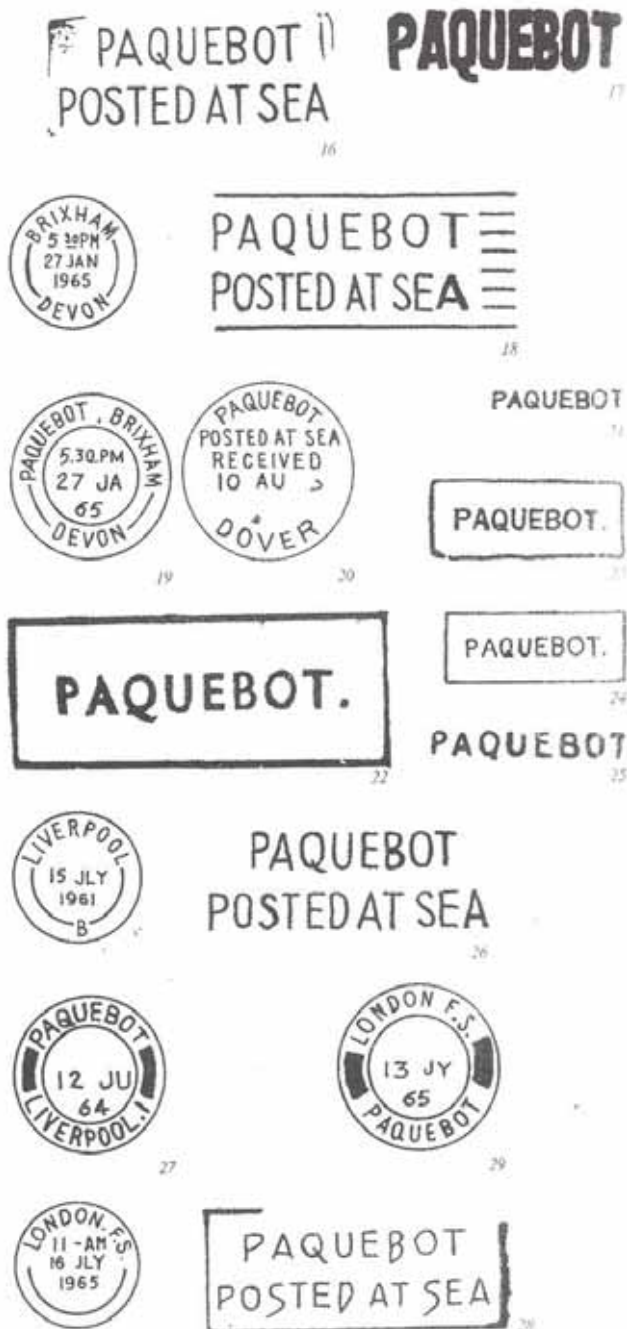
Hull. This metal slug (Fig. 25) first started work in Hull post office at least sixty-seven years ago. Certainly it must be the oldest British paquebot mark still in current use and is probably the oldest in the world. As type A13, Brigadier Studd records its earliest use as 1899, but recently, however, it was reported on a German postcard dated June 6th, 1898.

Even after sixty-seven years this is not a common mark for the passenger boat calls at Hull have produced very little mail over the years. Recently, it was thought that the mark had been withdrawn, but this proved to be wrong merely that due to a lack of ship mail, the mark had not been used for a long time.

The usual procedure is to cancel the ship mail in the ordinary way and impress the paquebot mark near the cancellation.

Liverpool. A wide range of passenger and cargo-passenger vessels deposit a lot of ship mail in a year yet, as with so many other ports, the handstamp (Fig. 27) seems to be far easier to obtain than the paquebot "slogan" (Fig. 26) which has to be specially set up in a machine. The machine mark is found with various circular portions, though there is only one die of the paquebot slogan. The measurements are roughly those given for Studd's type BIO, although the illustration differs in many respects. If the current mark is the same one, it has been in use since 1937 at least and probably longer.

(Courtesy : Gibbons Stamp Monthly, 1966)



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