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WHO WAS THE FIRST STAMP COLLECTOR?

MR. I. MARTIN WEARS, in the *Stamp Collectors' Journal*, attempts to discover the early stamp collectors. He says:

"The question as to who was the first individual to turn his attention to the formation of a collection of foreign stamps, is one which we cannot, and are not likely ever to be able to, solve; indeed we are not able to fix with anything like accuracy the date when stamp collecting began.

"It is therefore a fact of some consequence to learn that the earliest allusion to the hobby known in print appears in *Notes and Queries* for June 23, 1860, and is to the following effect:

"POSTAGE STAMPS.—A boy in my Form one day showed me a collection of from 300 to 400 different postage stamps, English and foreign, and at the same time stated that Sir Rowland Hill told him that at that time there might be about 500 varieties on the whole. This seems a cheap, instructive, and portable museum for young people to arrange, and yet I have seen no notices of catalogues, or specimens for sale, such as there are of coins, prints, plants, etc., and no articles in periodicals. A cheap *fac simile* catalogue, with nothing but names of respective States, periods of use, value, etc., would meet with attention. If there be a London shop where stamps or lists of them could be procured, its address would be acceptable to me and a score of young friends.

"*The School, Tonbridge.*"

S. F. CRESSWELL.

"To this query there was no reply.

"With the view of procuring additional information on the subject, Mr. P. J. Anderson, a writer on philatelic and antiquarian subjects, referring to this query, sent the following, in 1885, to *Notes and Queries*:

"ORIGIN OF STAMP COLLECTING.—In *Notes and Queries*, appears a note from "S. F. Cresswell, Tonbridge," referring to the collection of foreign postage stamps as coming in vogue among school-boys. Can any one point out an earlier allusion in print to this hobby, or mention any English stamp-collecting publication (catalogue, album, dealer's price list, etc.), of prior date to *Aids to Stamp Collectors*, Brighton, 1862, which is described in *Notes and Queries*? Possibly the advertisement pages of the First Series of Beeton's *Boys' Own Magazine*, if anywhere accessible, might reveal the existence of such. French stamp-collecting literature dates from 1861 at least."

"With the following result:

"In *Young England*, Vol. I, published January, 1862, p. 91, there is an article (continued in subsequent numbers) by Dr. John Edward Gray, of the British Museum, entitled "The Postage Stamps of the World," in which are these words: "I began to collect them shortly after the system was established, and many years before it became the fashion, simply because I believe that I was the first that proposed the system of a small uniform rate of postage to be prepaid by stamps." My father made a collection prior to this date, having a letter from a friend dated Chester, May 10, 1858, sending a contribution of postage stamps.

A. H. W. FYNMORE."

"Mr. Anderson, in his interesting bibliographical notes in *The Philatelic Record*

(Vol. VII, 89), says that so far back as 1841 he found an advertisement in the *Times* from a lady soliciting stamps to cover her dressing room, she having at that time succeeded in collecting 16,000.

“Dr. Viner, formerly editor of the *Stamp Collectors' Magazine*, in a contribution to the *Stamp News*, for October, 1882, touches on the subject of the first stamp collection. He believes that Belgium can claim the credit of introducing the hobby into the world, as he was assured by some students of the College at Lorrain they were its primogenitors. The first collection the Doctor himself saw was in the year 1854. It numbered about one hundred, and was arranged on a large chart, an arrangement imitated from a previous collection of a gentleman named Scales, ‘who may boast, if living, to be the first known collector in England.’ Of course at this date there were very few specimens to collect, as only fifty countries had adopted the use of postage stamps, compared with over two hundred at the present day. Writing of collecting as it was when he took up the mania—for so it was then termed—in the winter of 1859–60, Dr. Viner’s reminiscences of that time are rather interesting, and will bear repetition here:

“In those early days collections were small. From 300 to 500 specimens were considered to be forming a choice and almost perfect assortment. They mostly consisted of canceled stamps; but I remember one belonging to a young man who had voyaged in one of his father’s trading vessels round the coast of Portugal, Spain and Italy, who had gone ashore at every port and purchased new stamps everywhere. This now well-nigh priceless collection he disposed of for £5! It included Tuscan lions, Sicilians, blue Neapolitans, and early Spanish.”

EARLIEST POSTAGE STAMPS OF ASIA.

IN the official Catalogue of the London Philatelic Exhibition, 1890, Major Evans has the following note regarding the Scinde stamps:

“SCINDE DISTRICT DAWK.—These unpretending-looking disks were the fore-runners of the general issues for British India, having been introduced in Scinde in 1851 by the late Sir Bartle Frere. Until a few months ago only the *white* and *blue* varieties were known and they were fairly reckoned among the unattainables; a recent find, however, has brought a few copies of each into the market and has revealed the existence of an unknown variety in the third of the national colors. All British collectors will long for the second Dawk stamps in red, white and blue, but they won’t all get them.”

The following letter from the late Sir Bartle Frere, written in 1867, is interesting history:

“The postal arrangements in Scinde were, in 1850–51, very imperfect—the province was poor and did not pay its local expenses, and when we asked for more and better post-offices, we were reminded of our poverty, and told that when the government of India could afford money to spend in Scinde, there were many things to be provided before post-offices could be thought of. So, as we believed that post-offices were not mere luxuries, we considered how we could make the most of such means as we had, and our postmaster, Mr. Coffey, being a man of resources, hit upon this expedient. We got the stamps, of which you sent me a *fac simile*, manufactured, and they were issued to stamp-vendors and government officials much as they are in England, and every police officer, and native district collector of land revenue, customs, etc., was ordered to receive and forward with his own official papers, to his immediate official superior, all letters bearing one of these mysterious stamps of the British government, or rather of the great company. The stamp, you will observe, is the old East India Company’s modification of the broad arrow, which the East India Company used I believe from the time of Charles II, till the company itself was abolished; only the copyist has omitted the E. I., which, perhaps, in the stamp he copied from, had been obliterated.

“Thus every government office in Scinde became a district post-office for stamped letters, and the first official, who had a real post-office at hand, sent to it all the stamped letters which he and his subordinates had collected. The system worked very well, and, of course, very cheaply, for we got a complete net-work of post-offices and postal lines all over the country without expense.

“The success of the plan was one inducement to the introduction, soon after, of the present system of postage stamps as the Scinde experiment showed that the fancied objections of natives of India to postage stamps were quite baseless. It used always to be said, that ‘prepayment by stamps might do very well in Europe, but would never do in India,’ but this proved to be no more true of stamps than it has been of railways and other innovations.”

NEWSPAPER AND PERIODICAL STAMPS.

IT would make a stamp collector insane from covetousness to look at the fat portfolio of valuable postage stamps of the Chicago post-office. There were thousands of dollars' worth of stamps in very small compass, and they were of a rare kind and denomination, which the philatelists yearn for. They range in value from 1 cent to \$60. The \$60 stamp was not any larger than the 1 cent stamp, but a sheet of 100 stamps was worth \$6000, or more than the salary of the postmaster.

These stamps are never sold and seldom seen by the man who pays for them. They are, in fact, vouchers which represent money paid to the government for the postage on newspapers and periodicals. Every newspaper, magazine and periodical publication pays 1 cent a pound upon the printed matter sent to subscribers. It is accurately weighed in bundles and baskets and the postage is paid by the week or month. The publisher pays his money, is given a receipt, and then stamps are pasted upon the stubs of the receipt-book to equal the amount paid at the rate of 1 cent per pound. The publisher never sees the stamp which he has paid for, and could not buy one of them at any cost. When the stub-book is empty of receipts and full of stamped stubs it is sent to the post-office department at Washington.

Stamp collectors who are writing continually to the postmasters for these stamps are referred to the Washington office, and even then, of late years, cannot get them, as the department declines to give them out or sell them. However, it is probable that the canceled stamps are taken out by clerks, who realize handsomely by supplying collectors and the big postage stamp dealers of the East. Those collectors who want an unused stamp can hardly afford to pay \$60 for a bit of engraved paper which wouldn't carry an ordinary letter through the mail. But when thieves go through an office they know where to sell such rare stamps for which they can find no other market, and so the collectors are supplied, with no questions asked. The stamps range from 1 to 12 cents and then increase 12, so that 24, 36, 48, 60, 72, 84 and 96 cent stamps are the series up to \$1. Then come the \$1.92 stamps, the \$3, \$6, \$9, \$12, \$24, \$36, \$48 and \$60, which is the highest denomination. Should a bill be more or less the use of large and small stamps makes up the exact amount, so that a stub for \$69.87 would be covered with a nice array of steel engravings. The work on these stamps is far superior to the ordinary postage stamp, and the vignette pictures are all of mythological young women, including also a beautiful Indian maiden, who may be Pocahontas, Minnehaha, or some other dusky daughter of a sachem.

The use of the stamps by the Chicago office is remarkably great and is increasing every year. Last year nearly \$200,000 worth were canceled, and fully that amount will be used this year. This means the shipment of 20,000,000 pounds of newspapers and periodicals alone from the Chicago office. The amount has increased at the rate of 1,000,000 pounds a year for several years.—*Chicago Times*.

THERE are now no surcharged stamps for Madeira, the ordinary Portuguese stamps being used.

The Quaker City Philatelist.

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IN the October number of the *Philatelic Journal of America* is begun a history of the revenue stamps of Mexico. To collectors of revenues this will be an invaluable guide. The Mexican Postal Catalogue will also be appreciated. The publishers intend to issue an album for Mexican stamps only—postal and revenue.

THE surcharge “contra sello” or translated literally “counter stamps” on the stamps of Salvador, were made in consequence of a large number of stamps being stolen, and as a preventive against forgery.

BRITISH EAST AFRICA has already issued two sets of stamps. The first issue is obsolete, perhaps to turn up in a few years at a high price and to the advantage of some enterprising dealer.

MR. E. P. NEWCOMER has written the manuscript for a work to be entitled “Ten Days With a Modern Stamp Dealer,” which we understand is to appear about November 15. Mr. Jewett, 502 Congress street, Portland, Me., will publish the work and promises something fine. The book will be of a good size and illustrated. It will relate in a pleasing manner, what was heard and seen during a ten days’ visit to a well-known metropolitan stamp dealer.

IN the April, 1889, number of the *Stamp* are several editorial notes, which read if they were intended for a criticism of the last (1890) convention. The editor is somewhat of a prophet. “Mr Corwin has opened his mouth and closed it with his foot; he has sown the wind and it will take a patent mower to reap the resulting cyclone.” And again it says: “What’s the matter with arraying the American Philatelic Association on the side of consistency and divorcing it as much as possible from all suspicion of unfairness?” It looks very much as if those persons who started to run the American Philatelic Association for their own benefit were now about accomplishing their object. Members have no one to blame but themselves.

ACCORDING to the Demerara (British Guiana) *Daily Chronicle*, of August 27, the supply of 1c. stamps are again exhausted. The Post-office department having already surcharged the \$1, \$2, \$3 and \$4, are now preparing to treat the \$5 and \$6 in a similar manner, and also states that a fresh supply of stamps have arrived from England and are being issued to the public. More stamps that the Anti-Surcharge can't collect

MR. THEODOR BUHL, in the *Stamp News*, has the following regarding Peruvian stamps:

"We consider a proper collection of Peruvian stamps ten times more interesting than any collection of the stamps of Great Britain can possibly be. A collection of the latter requires knowledge, but it teaches nothing, but a properly arranged collection of the former shows us the whole development of the postal system, and the opening up of a country whose history, if it could be written, might rival that of ancient Greece. From what little is known of its history, we are justified in assuming that there was a mighty empire with a perfect form of government in the country of the Incas, when our ancestors were rude savages. Now there is a barren country slowly but surely drifting downwards, through the influence of a different civilization for which it is unfitted. However, we must not write about Peru, as it was before the Pacific Steam Navigation Company started its philatelic history with an experiment in stamps, used between Lima and Callaio, which were so soon superseded by a regular issue. Then we have the establishment of a local post between Lima and Chorillos, and passing the intermediate issues we come to the war with Chili. Every genuine surcharge, from the Chilean arms to the triangle with 'PERU,' gives us a different phase of the war, and the revolution which ended when General Caceres became President. On certain stamps of Arequipa, we have the portrait of the General and of Admiral Graw, and the local surcharges show us the troubles of various towns. To collect Peruvian requires patience, perseverance and philatelic knowledge."

OF COURSE, pictures are not the same as stamps, and so, even admitting the arguments of those who are getting frightened of the surcharge, we submit that the evil of "Surcharges made for collectors" is not half nor quarter so serious as it is made out to be. We would even go further, and say that *nine-tenths* of the surcharges which are looked upon with suspicion, and which are supposed to be made more for philatelists than to prepay postage, are undoubtedly legitimate issues, for the existence of which sufficient cause can be found, without suspecting the officials of filling their pockets. We are of the opinion that there are *very* few surcharges, the existence of which is due to any other cause than their necessity for postal purposes. Ceylon required stamps of 5, 10, 15, 28 cents, etc., and made them by using up the old stocks of other values, Hong Kong and the Straits Settlements, for the same reason, that the rates of postage were changed, issued 5 and 10 cent provisionals. The Turks' Islands, St. Vincent, Bahamas, Barbadoes, Bechuanaland, British Honduras, Cape, Natal, Fiji, Cyprus, Transvaal and Portuguese Indies, are all legitimate issues, for whose existence good reasons are known. We do not mean to say that there are not other cases where the reverse can be shown, but we believe their number to be much smaller than is generally supposed. A better way to help philately, in the matter of surcharges, would be to prosecute the makers and vendors of the forged ones; the genuine can take care of themselves. Everything has its day, and the time may not be far distant when the manufacture and sale of forgeries will be put a stop to.

THE *Post Card* (which by the way is a most valuable journal) says:

"The name postal card is distinctly an Americanism, for in England, Canada and Australia we find the term post card. Our expression is a mere translation of the French *carte postale*. In Italy you buy a *cartolina postale*, in Spain a *tarjeta postal* and in Germany a *postkarte*. You can get a *brevkort* in Norway and Denmark, a *brefkort* in Sweden and a *briefkaart* in Holland and Belgium. The Hungarian purchases a *levelező-lap*, the thinnest in existence, as it is printed on mere paper, while the Russian

Nihilist, who isn't quite satisfied with the way Alexander is running things, can file his little remonstrance, coupled with vague allusions to dynamite, on an otrkroto pisimo.

LOSS AND STRANGE RECOVERY OF A LETTER.—A letter containing foreign stamps, addressed to Mr. Sell, Bishop's Stortford, England, which should have reached its destination a fortnight previously, arrived last Sunday morning. From a printed label which was attached to the back of the letter, the following incident is connected with the delay:

"This postal packet was contained in mail bag from Kingston for New York, *via* Port Maria, Jamaica, for despatch upon S. S. 'Bergenseren,' which mail bag was washed away in the 'Houghton' river, near Annotto bay, on the night of Sunday, the 18th inst., and which was subsequently recovered.

"FRED SULLIVAN, *Postmaster for Jamaica.*

"GENERAL POST-OFFICE, 21st February, 1890."

PHILATELIC DIRECTORY

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