

# THE TEN MOST VALUABLE STAMPS



**Mystic Stamp Company**  
America's Leading Stamp Dealer

No.  
**ONE**

# “MAURITIUS BALL” COVER ORANGE-RED 1D POST OFFICE ISSUE

Price: \$11,940,000

A world record was established on June 26th, 2021, when the hammer came down at the German auction house of Christophe Gaertner. The **1847 Mauritius Ball Cover** sold for the highest price ever paid for a single philatelic item – the incredible sum of \$11.94 million. (A total of the purchase price of €8.1 million plus buyer’s premium of 23.8%.) It also marked the first time a philatelic item (single stamp, block, or cover) had sold for over \$10 million. The price realized for this cover, one of the stamp world’s greatest postal rarities, was more than double its pre-auction estimate.

Only three of the precious covers are known. This is the only one in private hands. The two others reside in the Royal Philatelic Collection of Queen Elizabeth II and in the British Library’s Tapling Collection.

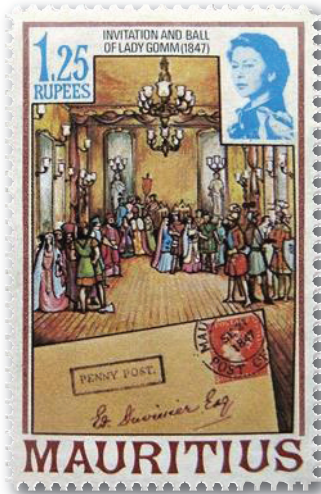
Mauritius lies in the Indian Ocean 1,200 miles off the southeast coast of Africa. Britain won the battle for the

island against French forces in 1810. It remained a British Crown Colony until independence in 1968. Still part of the Commonwealth, Mauritius was the fifth country in the world to issue postage stamps. The celebrated Ball Cover is franked with the 1847 Mauritius #1, the first-ever British colonial issue. It is called the “Ball Cover” because it once carried an invitation to a fancy formal event hosted by Lady Elizabeth Gomm, wife of Mauritius’s British Governor.

The ball was meant to improve Anglo-French relations on the island. Lady Gomm sent invitations to the September 30th ball to local recipients. Thus, only the name of the addressee (H. Adam

Esq. Jun’r) appears on the envelope – with no address. Its postage is paid with the rare and legendary 1-pence orange-red “Post Office” stamp. The need for stamps to use on these very invitations may have even led to their issue...

The 1-pence (1d) orange-red “Post



*A Mauritius Ball cover from the Royal Philatelic Collection is shown on this 1978 Mauritius commemorative stamp.*



The 1847 cover featured a prized Mauritius 1-penny orange-red Post Office stamp. It contained an invitation to a ball on the island of Mauritius. Only three such covers are known to exist.

Office” issue, is so called because of the inscription running up the left side of the stamp. The 2-pence stamp, issued at the same time, is the Mauritius Blue,” similarly inscribed. Among the world’s most valuable, the locally produced stamps have colors and designs similar to those found on British stamps of the time period. The stamps are rather primitive when compared with Britain’s, but were produced on an emergency basis when a shipment of stamps from London had not yet been received (perhaps in time for the ball?) They were produced in the offices of a local newspaper – *The Gazette*.

Also ensuring the status of both the 1-pence orange-red and its cover as among the rarest philatelic items in the world, is the stamp’s minuscule issue quantity of 500 stamps. Today, according to the Mauritius Post, only

15 examples of the 1-pence stamps are thought to survive.

The recipient of the Ball Cover invitation, Henry Adams, found this precious souvenir among his belongings 50 years later. He sold it in 1899 to Théophile Lemaire, a French stamp dealer, for £680. It passed through the hands of many high-powered collectors (including King Carol II of Romania) to top today’s list as the most valuable philatelic treasure in the world.

**Fun Fact:** The Mauritius #1 figures prominently in a detective novel by EV Cunningham titled *The Case of the One-Penny Orange*. Also, along with its sister stamp, the 2-pence blue, in the play *Mauritius*, by Theresa Rebeck, which appeared on Broadway in 2007.

No.  
**TWO**

# 1856 BRITISH GUIANA 1¢ MAGENTA

Adjusted Price: \$10,364,000 • Original Price: \$9,480,000

The British Guiana, commonly called the “1¢ Magenta,” is the world’s most famous stamp. It is certainly the most valuable. Only one example of the 1856 stamp is known to survive. It has been called the “Holy Grail of Stamp Collecting”.

This stamp has a long and interesting history. It was issued in the former Crown Colony of British Guiana – present-day Guyana on the northern coast of South America. The one-cent definitive, along with two others, was printed at the offices of a local newspaper (*The Royal Gazette*) by order of Georgetown’s postmaster. The purpose was provisional use while he awaited a stamp shipment from London. While few were printed, even fewer were saved. Luckily for collectors everywhere, this one used example survived to enchant us all with its story.

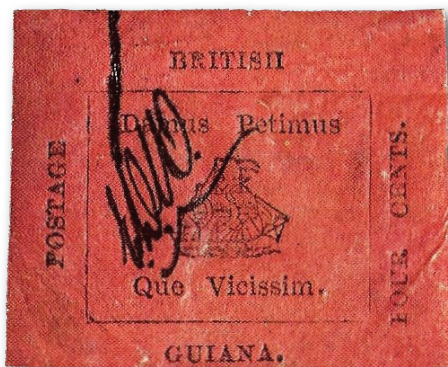
The unique British Guiana made its way to the stamp market in 1873 thanks to a discovery by Vernon Vaughan, a young Scottish boy. The

12-year-old collector found the stamp in his parents’ attic. Not happy with its clipped corners, he sold it to another collector for six shillings (about \$10 today) and bought some better-looking stamps. Five years later, the stamp was purchased for 40 pounds by renowned philatelist Count Philipp von Ferrary. It remained in his fabulous collection for

almost 40 years. After his death, the stamp was given to the Berlin postal museum, then after the First World War it was seized and sold for war reparations.

In the years that followed, the stamp was owned by several prominent

collectors. One of them was Arthur Hind of Utica, New York (not far from Mystic’s Camden headquarters). In 1981, it was purchased by the heir to the Du Pont chemical fortune, John E. Du Pont. After his death, the stamp was bought at auction by famed shoe designer Stuart Weitzman for nearly \$10 million dollars. At the time, Sotheby’s, which held the auction, stated the stamp was the most expensive item by weight



*The details of the British Guiana are better seen in this image of the 4-cent stamp of the same issue.*



*The 1¢ magenta was part of a series of three definitive stamps issued in 1856 and was intended for use on local newspapers.*

and size ever sold. In fact, this was the fourth time the Holy Grail of Philately broke the record for single stamp auction price. The stamp was sold again, to the philatelic firm of Stanley Gibbons, bringing it back to British soil for the first time in over 140 years.

All owners of the British Guiana have placed their mark on the back of the stamp. Weitzman's mark was the silhouette of a shoe. Watch Mr. Weitzman make his history mark on the British Guiana online at YouTube.com.

Originally the British Guiana was rectangular, but the stamp was clipped before its 1873 discovery. To guard against forgery, stamps of the period were signed by postal clerks. The manuscript initials "E.D.W" can be seen on the left side, standing for

Edward D. Wight. Its three-masted sailing ship vignette is hard to make out, as is the Latin motto of the colony: "We give and we ask in return."

Despite its weathered appearance, the British Guiana remains revered around the world by generations of stamp collectors. For a limited time after the firm of Stanley Gibbons purchased the one-cent magenta, collectors were offered chance to own a share of this great rarity, truly a stamp collector's dream.

**Fun Fact:** The British Guiana is the only major postage stamp issue not found in Queen Elizabeth II's collection, also known as the Royal Philatelic Collection

No.  
**THREE**

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## “BORDEAUX” COVER MAURITIUS 2d BLUE (XXII) AND MAURITIUS 1d RED (XXI)

Adjusted Price: \$7,166,000 • Original Price: \$4,000,000

The Mauritius “Bordeaux” Cover, has been called the “Crown Jewel of Philately.” For over 20 years, until 2014, it held the distinction of being the most expensive philatelic item in the world.

Like the Mauritius “Ball Cover,” the Bordeaux Cover is franked with the 1-penny orange-red Mauritius #1. It also carries the deep blue 2-pence stamp, which was issued at the same time in 1847. Both stamps were produced for emergency use, while officials waited for a stamp shipment to arrive from London. While somewhat primitive, as they were locally produced in the newspaper offices of *The Gazette*, their colors are, after more than 150 years, rich and fresh. Both stamps are part of the Mauritius “Post Office” issue. It is so-called because the two words are inscribed up the left-hand side of the stamps.

The cover is a folded letter, sent from Edward Francis & Co. of Port Louis, Mauritius, on October 4th, 1847. The addressees are wine merchants Messieurs Ducau and Lurguie of Bordeaux, France. The correspondence on the folded letter confirms receipt of a wine shipment from the company’s suppliers. A young French boy found the cover in some old correspondence at the wine company after hearing about the rare stamps. It was acquired by Theophile Lemaire in 1903 for 1,600 pounds and later ended up in

the possession of several noted collectors such as Baron Philipp von Ferrary of Paris, France, and Arthur Hind, of Utica, New York.

Postmarks on the front and back of the cover confirm the journey of the Bordeaux Cover. It began on Mauritius, a tiny island located in the Indian Ocean off the southeast coast of Africa. A former British Colony, Mauritius was the fifth country to issue stamps. Its stamps were the first British colonial issues. Only 500 of each stamp were produced.

The Bordeaux Cover embarked on its journey by private ship via Plymouth, England on October 4, 1847, as attested by the circular Mauritius Post Office date stamp on both front and back of the cover. On the front is the COLONIES AND ART. 13 hand-stamp of the British Post Office and PENNY POST in an upside-down rectangle over both stamps. The stamps are tied to the cover by a red “Boulogne” circular date stamp showing the cover arrived in France on December 26, 1847. Four postmarks on the back of the cover show its stops on the journey, including the Plymouth SHIP LETTER handstamp when it reached England and its final destination of Bordeaux.

Mauritius can proudly lay claim to having produced some of the best-known and revered philatelic rarities in the world.



p Londres  
 Port Louis, Maurice  
 le 4 Octobre 1847.

Messieurs Ducau & Lurguie, Mess  
 Bordeaux

Chers Messieurs,

Nous avons l'honneur de vous  
 confirmer notre honorer du 15 de l'après, nous  
 accusant réception du commandement et de la facture  
 de notre envoi de

L.N. 48 Barriques vin rouge Montfermeil  
 chargés à bord de l'Auguste Toffe

Ajoutant bien nous venons vous donner avis de  
 la vente d'une partie de ces vins, c'est-à-dire environ  
 50 pipes, au prix de £ 21.00. sans Coût de 6 s/6, comme  
 d'usage. Ce chiffre a été le résultat des plus grands  
 efforts, et nous nous estimons heureux de ne pas être  
 obligés d'en faire à nos relations pour les futures  
 qui reste à venir...

En attendant le plaisir de recevoir de vos nouvelles  
 nous avons l'honneur de vous saluer

Edward Francis & Co.

(Small signature in bottom left corner)

On October 4th, 1847, the firm Edward Francis & Co. of Port Louis, Mauritius, confirms to their correspondent, the Wine Merchant Ducau & Lurguie in Bordeaux, France, an order for 30 barrels of wine.

No.  
**FOUR**

## 1918 INVERTED JENNY PLATE-NUMBER BLOCK OF FOUR

Adjusted Price: \$5,200,000 • Original Price: \$4,800,000

The Jenny Invert error may just be the most famous and recognizable stamp rarity ever created. It is perhaps the most beautiful and recognized of all.

The introduction of airmail was a revolution in communication – furthered by and also fostering the fledgling US aviation industry. In both war and peace.

The first airmail stamp was issued a few months before the end of World War I. It was hoped the patriotic red, white and blue stamp would lift the spirits of a war-weary country. It did a lot more than that. It produced an error stamp that would become the “Holy Grail of US philately” – a full-fledged inverted error. A formal request for the stamp didn’t reach the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) until less than two weeks before it was needed for the first airmail flight. The process was ripe for errors. An understaffed BEP worked around the clock to meet the May 15th, 1918, deadline. The red frame was printed first. Then the sheets fed through the press again to add the blue Jenny vignette and plate number 8493.

Nine of the 20,000 sheets of 24¢ Jenny airmail stamps printed had been hand-fed through the printing press upside down. The mistake created an inverted central design and positioned the plate number on the bottom selvage. Only one sheet made it out of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, to be sold in a Washington, DC, post office to one

William Robey, who was dreaming and even expecting one to turn up. Philately was changed forever. The error sheet is only part of the story. That sheet had only one block bearing a plate number. And that made it the world’s greatest stamp



*Don Sundman and Charles Shreve exchange the rarities on November 2, 2005.*

rarity – the unique Inverted Jenny Plate-Number Block.

If the error hadn’t occurred, the plate number would have been printed in the top selvage and trimmed away after the perforation process, so the sheet would fit in a postal clerk’s drawer, just like all the other 24¢ Jenny sheets.

After spending over 70 years unseen by collectors, the Jenny Invert Plate-Number Block sold in 1989 for



*Jenny Invert Plate-Number Block Positions 87, 88, 97, and 98.*

an unprecedented \$1.1 million. Then in 2005, nearly 90 years after it first made headlines around the world, the block was auctioned for \$2.97 million, the highest price ever paid for a US philatelic item. It had been purchased by one Bill Gross – billionaire collector and major benefactor of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum’s William H. Gross Stamp Gallery.

But there’s even more to the intriguing story of the Jenny Invert Plate Block. Less than two weeks after the auction, the legendary Jenny Block was attracting even more attention. This time it was swapped in a one-on-one trade in front of worldwide media.

Bill Gross needed one last stamp to complete his collection of 19th-century US stamps. But Don Sundman owned

it. In fact, he had recently outbid Gross at auction for the 1¢ Z-Grill – America’s rarest stamp. Charles Shreve of Shreve Auction Galleries approached Don about an even trade for his client: the Unique Jenny Invert Plate-Number Block for America’s rarest stamp. It was a deal. Now Mystic owned the Jenny Invert Plate Block and Don continued making sure collectors around the country could see this legendary centerpiece of stamp collecting.

In 2015, Don Sundman sold the Jenny Invert Plate-Number Block to famed shoe designer Stuart Weitzman for over \$5 million dollars. And in 2021, Weitzman sold the block to stamp collector and member of the Smithsonian Institution’s Board of Regents David M. Rubenstein.

No.  
**FIVE**

# 1868 ONE-CENT Z GRILL AMERICA'S RAREST STAMP

Adjusted Price: \$3,940,000 • Original Price: \$2,970,000

The 1¢ Z Grill is America's rarest and most valuable stamp. Mystic president Don Sundman had the honor of owning it from 1998 until 2005. It is the only 1¢ Z Grill available to collectors today. Only two were ever identified by William Stevenson, creator of the grill classification system still in use today.

Only 1,000 1¢ Z Grills were produced. Research indicates the stamps were printed for only a few days in late February 1868. And they saw limited use – most were affixed to folded public notices and thrown away.

Grills are patterns embossed into the paper of some early US stamps. They broke the fibers and caused ink to be absorbed into the grill when the stamp was cancelled, making removal of the cancel and reuse of the stamp impossible. The system was invented by Charles F. Steele and used briefly in the 1860s

What makes the Z Grill different from other grills? It is unique because its tiny grid projections have a horizontal orientation. All other grills have vertical projections. And to set it even more

apart, the 1¢ Z Grill Mystic owned has a double grill – with a very strong grill pattern appearing over a weaker, slightly angled one. It also has the clear city postmark of Philadelphia, making it even more unique.

Lester G. Bookman, noted stamp authority, rediscovered the stamp in

1956. Philatelic expert Elliot Perry verified the stamp's authenticity. This outstanding rarity would change hands several times over the coming years, increasing in value with each sale. Benjamin K. Miller had earlier donated his 1¢ Z Grill to the New York Public Library where it resides permanently today, hidden from public view to prevent theft.

In 1980, the only available 1¢ Z Grill was purchased by Jerry Bus, owner of the LA Lakers, for \$100,000. A few years later, financier Robert Zoellner acquired it for \$418,000. In 1998, when Zoellner's collection was auctioned, Don Sundman was dreaming of owning America's rarest stamp. Now he had his chance. Don's 11-year-old son Zachary wielded the bidding paddle



*Here you can easily see the grill pattern on the reverse side of the stamp.*



*There are currently only two known one-cent 1868 Z Grills, both with cancellation marks.*

alongside his father and a friend. The stamp was theirs with the final bid of \$850,000 plus 10% commission, a total of \$935,000 – the highest price ever paid for a US stamp. Still, Don felt, he had gotten a “bargain.” Though at the time he didn’t know it, Don had outbid billionaire collector Bill Gross, who needed that stamp...

Don Sundman displayed the 1¢ Z Grill at several major stamp shows, including World Stamp Expo 2000. This gave thousands of collectors from around the world their only chance to see America’s rarest stamp. It was soon valued at \$2.5 million.

The 1¢ Z Grill wasn’t for sale. But Charles Shreve of Shreve Philatelic Galleries approached Mystic’s

president with a unique proposition. His client, Bill Gross, had nearly completed his collection of 19th-century US stamps. Mystic had the key to achieving his goal – the 1¢ Z Grill. If Gross could acquire the unique Jenny Invert Plate-Number Block at the upcoming auction, would Mystic trade the Z Grill for it?

Don decided the trade would be fun, historic – a great story for stamp collectors. And he was right. After Gross acquired the Jenny Invert Plate Block for \$2.97 million, the one-to-one trade took place in November, 2005. The equal swap made headlines around the world and was featured on television and National Public Radio, a coup for the hobby of stamp collecting.

# 1855 TRESKILLING YELLOW THREE-SKILLING ERROR OF COLOR

Adjusted Price: \$3,795,000 • Original Price: \$2,300,000

Sweden's yellow-orange Treskilling is the only one known to philately. One of the first stamps issued by the country in 1855, it was produced in a set of five denominations. The three-skilling value was normally printed in blue green, while the eight-cent was printed in yellow orange. The quantity of this rare error of color originally printed is unknown.

It is likely that the three-skilling printing plate was accidentally substituted for the eight, after some mishap with the latter's printing plate. In 1858, Swedish currency changed from skillings to ören and with it, stamp denominations. The error wasn't discovered until 1886 when a young man named Georg Backman found a cover – where else but in an attic – franked with the yellow-orange Treskilling stamp. The lad sold it to a stamp dealer in Stockholm for 7 kronors.

In 1894, the stamp ended up, as many rarities did back then, in the

collection of noted philatelist Baron Philipp von Ferrary. The rich collector had amassed the largest collection in the world. He paid 4,000 gold florins for the stamp. After passing through several other collections, in 1937, the three skilling was sold to King Carol II of Rumania, by auction house H.R. Harmer for £5,000. Despite the Swedish Postal Museum of Stockholm proclaiming the

stamp a fake in 1974, it was declared genuine after two independent committees examined it and ruled against the Museum's judgment.

The Treskilling sold in 1990 for over \$1 million and its value continued to increase, topping \$2.3 million in 1996. When it was sold to an anonymous buyer in 2010, the bid was kept confidential, but was determined to be

at least a match for the previous selling price. The purchaser is now known to have been Marc Armand Rousso.

The high profile stamp was purchased privately in 2013 by Swedish nobleman, billionaire, and politician – Count Gustaf Douglas.



*The three-skilling stamp was normally printed in a blue-green color, while the eight-skilling stamp was printed in yellowish orange.*



*This stamp was cancelled at Nya Kopparberget (now known as Kopparberg), about 93 miles from Uppsala, Sweden, on July 13, 1857.*

**Fun Fact:** Sweden's Treskilling error of color figures in the plot of the 1963 movie *Charade*, starring Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn, alongside a coveted Hawaiian Missionary stamp.

No.  
**SEVEN**

# THE “DAWSON” COVER ONLY COVER KNOWN WITH 2¢ HAWAIIAN MISSIONARY STAMP

Adjusted Price: \$3,227,000 • Original Price: \$1,900,000

The rarest and most valuable stamp of Hawaii is the 2¢ blue “Missionary” stamp. It is much rarer than other denominations, because it was used to pay postage only on newspapers mailed to the United States. The only cover known to bear that 2¢ 1851 stamp is this unique Hawaiian Missionary Cover. It is also the only intact envelope to carry two Missionary stamps of differing denominations. Both stamps are in very fine condition and have no repairs, unlike most of those which survive. In fact, it is one of the most valuable and important philatelic items in the world.

Also known as the “Dawson Cover,” this precious cover has a long and interesting history. That history began in 1819, when King Kamehameha II granted religious freedom to all residents of the Kingdom of Hawaii. By the 1840s, American Christian missionaries had settled in the islands and were ministering to the inhabitants. And

they wanted to write home...

Prior to the establishment of a Hawaiian postal service, sending a letter to the mainland was inconvenient at best. One had to find a ship bound for America, locate its captain, and hope he was willing to mail the letter. If he accepted the commission, when the ship docked, he would deliver the letter to a local post office and receive a fee of 2¢ for his service. The post office would collect the postage from the recipient.

As the volume of mail from missionaries, teachers, and traders increased, so did the need for a more systematic way of sending mail. With

Kamehameha III’s approval, the first post office was established in 1850, and the printing of stamps authorized by the legislature. In June 1851, the first Hawaii stamps were issued.

The new stamps were produced in Honolulu by Postmaster Henry Whitney, on printing presses of the government-run newspaper



*The Dawson cover is only known cover bearing the Hawaiian 2-cent Missionary.*



*The only known cover bearing the Hawaiian 2-cent Missionary stamp.*

*The Polynesian.* There were three denominations – 2¢ for newspapers, 5¢ for regular US delivery and 13¢ for delivery to the east coast. All had the same design, and each was printed with blue ink on fragile, tissue-thin pelure paper. The new stamps came to be called “The Missionaries” for obvious reasons. Less than 200 survive today, including just 15 of the 2¢ variety, making them a dream of collectors around the world.

The Missionary Cover was sent to Miss Eliza Dawson of New York by William Dawson, with a note on the reverse saying “Give my love to all”. The writer also added a pair of two 3¢ US #11A stamps, for a total of 13¢, the postage rate to the East Coast of America. The cover went to New York by way of San Francisco, as shown by the circular date stamp denoting city, state abbreviation and the date of 27 Oct. tying the two US

stamps to the cover. It shows no year date, but 1852 has been established according to Mr. Dawson’s arrival on the Islands and other correspondence. The red date stamp of OCT 4 (again, no year) reads both “Honolulu” and “US Postage Paid.” A single postmark denoting two sovereign countries – just one more unique facet of this fabulous piece of philatelic history.

**Fun Fact:** The Dawson Cover and Hawaiian Missionary stamps are the subjects of US #3694, a beautiful sheet of four stamps. It’s a clever way to get these historic stamps into your collection. A Hawaiian Missionary stamp was involved in the plot of the 1963 movie *Charade*, starring Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn, along with Sweden’s Yellow Tresskilling.

No.  
**EIGHT**

“**ERROR OF COLOUR**”  
**SICILY 1/2 GRANO BLUE**

Adjusted Price: \$2,971,000 • Original Price: \$2,600,000



*Only two examples of the 1/2 Grano Blue Sicilian Error of Color stamp are known to exist.*

The Kingdom of Two Sicilies (Di Sicilia) issued only 26 stamps in its short life (1858-62). The original color of the 1859 1/2 grano stamp was orange. It is likely only one sheet was printed in blue. By the time twenty-five examples of the blue error of color were discovered, five had already been sold. Today, only two one-half granos are known, making the stamp one of the rarest in the world. The two stamps were first exhibited at the Manchester Philatelic Exhibition of 1899. The two were separated from an envelope fragment and the defective example sold for £5,000 in 1963.

In 1996, Alberto Bolaffi exhibited the remaining stamp, said to be in perfect condition, at ANPHILEX in New York. That stamp was sold in Basel, Switzerland, by Galerie Dreyfus for \$2.6 million in June 2011 and is pictured above.

Blue color trials of the 1/2 grano

exist, but the color is a different shade of blue and not of be confused with the real stamp. The trials were also printed from plate I instead of plate II.

The former Kingdom of Two Sicilies was made up of southern Italy and the island of Sicily. It was united with Sardinia in 1860 after Garibaldi overthrew the king of Two Sicilies in his campaign to unite Italy. Stamps of Italy have been in use since 1862.

**Fun Fact:** Although only two examples of the 1/2 Grano Blue Sicilian Error of Color stamp are known to exist, this one is in remarkable condition for its age. Many rare stamps this old become damaged from being improperly stored for years before being discovered. But this stamp is in great condition with vibrant blue ink!



*Of the two surviving 1859 1/2 grano stamps, this one is in excellent condition.*

No.  
**NINE**

## 1847 “RUSH COVER” STRIP OF SIX 10¢ BLACK

Adjusted Price: \$2,440,000 • Original Price: \$1,900,000

This beautiful cover is rightfully one of the most treasured in American philately. The 1847 Rush cover is franked with a horizontal strip of six 10¢ black US #2s, the largest-known multiple of this stamp on cover. It has been described as “the most important cover known to American philately.”

This unique cover was sent by Benjamin Rush from Philadelphia to his father, Richard, the American minister to France. The envelope with its letter went by railroad from Philadelphia to New York City (see the red “PHILAD<sup>^</sup>RAILROAD” handstamp) where it was put aboard the RMS *Europa*, a British mail steamer, on September 27, 1848. The steamer docked in Liverpool, England, on October 10th where a receiving datestamp was applied in red: 10 OC 10 48 along with a matching COLONIES&C. ART. 13 Anglo-French accountancy handstamp applied at the London post office. The cover then traveled by train on to Dover, across the English

Channel to Boulogne, France. From there it traveled by rail to Paris where a receiving handstamp was applied, reading ANGL./3/BOULOGNE-S-MER/3/11 OCT 48. This datestamp also ties the strip of six to the cover. Quite a journey.

There is a horizontal crease across all the stamps that was apparently made before the stamps were affixed to the cover, but the imperfection doesn't affect its appearance.

The cover has been authenticated twice by the Philatelic Foundation. The names of two previous owners are stamped on the back of the Rush Cover: John Seybold, the cover's first collector-owner from Syracuse, New York,

and Henry C. Gibson.

Billionaire stamp collector William H. Gross purchased the cover at auction from Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries in 2006 for \$1,380,000 with buyer's premium. The cover was sold again, this time by Bill Gross in the auction of his United States 1847 First Issue collection, handled by Siegel in 2020.



*US #2, the 1847 10¢ Washington, is a rare find today in any condition.*



The 1847 Rush Cover has the largest-known multiple of US #2

**Fun Fact:** Benjamin Rush's father, Richard had a distinguished career, serving in the administrations of several presidents. Among his credentials were minister to France, minister to Great Britain, secretary of the Treasury, and US attorney general.

## “XIPHOPAGUS TRIPLET” TWO 30R AND ONE 60R STAMPS

Adjusted Price: \$2,280,000 • Original Price: \$1,900,000

The last, but not least, of the philatelic treasures on our top ten list is this unique se-tenant strip of three – one 60r and two 30r (reis) stamps of Brazil. The strip gets its name from the Latin *xiphopagus*. Though the term means conjoined twins, in this case it refers to the unique attached multiple of three.

The “Xiphopagus Triplet” is also known to collectors worldwide as the “Pack Strip.” It is named after Charles Lathrop Pack, who owned the stamp for 28 years and generously exhibited it for collectors to see.

The Pack Strip was printed in 1843, as part of the first issue of Brazil, though it wasn’t discovered until over 50 years later in 1897. Ever since, it has been one of the world’s most famous rarities. It is the only triplet from the Bull’s Eye stamp issue known to exist.

Here’s the story behind this famous multiple...

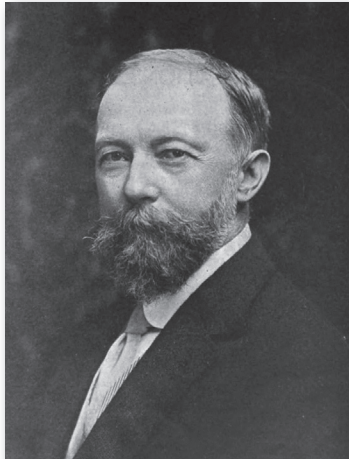
Brazil was the second country in the world to issue postage stamps.

It was second only to Great Britain, which had issued its first stamps just three years earlier. Only three denominations printed in large central numerals were issued. Like Great Britain, the stamps had no country name. Unlike Great Britain though, they had no portrait of the monarch.

It was deemed disrespectful because the stamps would eventually be thrown away. And a familiar image like the Emperor Dom Pedro II’s might facilitate counterfeiting. Interestingly, the use of a large central numeral with lines engraved around it was a British invention, leading collectors to think the stamps had been

produced in England.

The first stamps of Brazil were called the “Bull’s Eye” issue, due to their size and shape. And it was during the production of these stamps that the Xiphopagus Triplet was born, when one plate accidentally combined separate panes of the three denominations. The triplet was



*The triplet also is known as the “Pack Strip” after Charles Lathrop Pack*

configured so it received two 30r stamps and one 60r, although there was a 90r denomination on the plate as well.

The Pack Strip has two circular date stamps reading 1844 and *Correio Geral da Corte* (General Court Mail). It has generous margins and few flaws.

Still in good condition after more than 175 years, many owners, and world travels, the Pack Strip Triplet was sold to an anonymous buyer by Robert Siegel Auctions of New York in 2008 for \$1,150,000.

**Fun Fact:** In 1954, the Pack Strip was featured in the “World’s Rarest Stamps,” an article appearing in *Life* magazine. Some collectors at Mystic remember the issue fondly, with all those rare and beautiful stamps stirring our youthful collecting dreams.



The “Xiphopagus Triplet” consists of three Bull’s Eye stamps with two different denominations.