



(Synopsis) Nepal: The First Issue, 1881 to 1885



Nepal's first issue of postage stamps was printed between April 1881 and the end of 1885. The stamps were printed on white wove paper of European manufacture. Between April and June 1881 sheets were gummed and pin-perforated. Printings between June 1881 and 1885 were issued without gum and imperforate.

Stamps were printed in Kathmandu using flatbed, letterpress equipment from forms composed of 64 individual clichés. The use of a new form that included a variation in the inscription or in the position of a cliché, has been deemed to be a new "setting."

All classic stamp issue material from Nepal is rare by normal philatelic standards. No genuine essay or proof material exists. The stamps were only valid for domestic postage and there are only four different postal rates known prepaid with the first issue. In total, there are fewer than sixty known covers of the 1881-1885 issue and almost all are single weight covers prepaid with the one anna stamp. All two and four annas stamps of this issue in used condition are exceptional and the only reported used 4 annas pin-perforated is shown.

Additional highlights of the pin-perforated 1881 issue include one of five known one anna uses on cover as well as the spectacular two annas pin-perforated registered cover bearing a pair and a single used in combination with an imperforate one anna. This cover, arguably the finest first issue cover of Nepal, is the only reported use of the two annas pin-perforated on cover as well as the only known combination cover bearing a pin-perforated stamp. The imperforate issues include the earliest of three known covers bearing the full set of three denominations, the only reported used example of a tête-bêche item of the issue (a two annas inverted cliché in a used strip of three). The one anna and two annas strips shown are the largest known used multiples of the issue. Also included is the earliest reported use of the imperforate issue, and three of the six known two annas imperforate single uses on cover.

The two principal authors and expert students of Nepal philately over the last forty years were Dr. Wolfgang Hellrigl and Dr. Armand Singer. All of the most important items in this exhibit previously graced one or both of these collections and most are illustrated in the relevant literature.

The best books on the subject are Wolfgang Hellrigl's 1984 book, "The Classic Stamps of Nepal," his book on the native postmarks of Nepal and the Armand Singer 1997 book, "Nepal 1772-1961 and Beyond." Also an important source for documentation of the Hellrigl collection is the "Edition D'Or, Nepal, Volume #47" book published by Corinphila when his collection was dispersed.