

The Classic Stamp Issues of Nepal

synopsis

The classic postage stamp issue of Nepal, consisting of three denominations, was introduced in 1881. An additional denomination was added in 1899. In 1907, stamps of a new pictorial design replaced the classic design stamps for postal purposes and the few remaining sheets were stored.

When a telegraph line was established in 1917, the stored stamps were released for use to pay telegraphic fees. Printing of the four classic design stamps was then resumed and continued until 1930. Although valid for postage, the intended use was to pay telegraphic fees.

All classic stamp issue material from Nepal is rare by normal philatelic standards. No genuine essay or proof material exists. There are a very limited number of different domestic postal rates that can be shown as the stamps were only valid for postage within Nepal. For example, 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.

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

The highlights of the 1881 issue include the earliest of three known covers with the full set of three denominations and the only reported used example of a tête-bêche item of the issue. One anna and two annas strips shown are the largest known used multiples of the issue. Also, in the first issue material is the earliest reported use of the imperforate issue, and the unique used pin-perforated four annas from the Hellrigl collection. The two annas uses on cover include three of the six known.

Later issue highlights include rarities of the 1901 European paper issue with the only known mint block of the one anna (ex Singer). This famous block is enhanced by the presence of a tête-bêche pair. Also shown is the unique pin-perforated tête-bêche pair with damaged cliché in position 64 (ex Hellrigl), and the only known used single of that position.

The 1899 one-half anna issue rarities include two of six known postal uses paying the intended one-half anna rate from the Maharajah's hunting camp as well as one of three known pairs paying the one anna rate. The 1917 one-half anna vermilion stamp, the most famous and valuable stamp of Nepal, is represented by the largest known mint multiple, the bottom half of the O'Sullivan discovery sheet, ex Hellrigl. Also shown are three used tête-bêche pairs, one from each of the three inverted cliché positions in the setting and the only set known. The lemon shade of the stamp is represented by two of the five known examples including the only known example on cover.

Rare rates and uses include four complete sets of all three denominations on cover. The single franking of the four annas denomination on a quadruple rate cover is also an only recorded example.

Nepal philately features numerous tête-bêche errors caused by inverted clichés being placed in the forms used for printing. This exhibit includes more than 100 of these inverted cliché items as well as numerous errors of color and important cliché flaws.

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.