

The oldest stamp collection: a sequel

KEN LAWRENCE

Several readers responded to my August 2009 Spotlight column, "How our hobby began: the origins of stamp collecting," referring me to additional references and information. By perfectly timed coincidence, Scott catalog editor Jim Kloetzel displayed his 1861 cover album, published by J.M. Whittemore & Co., of Boston at the American Philatelic Society's Summer Seminar on Philately. With more details and interesting insights, these subjects are well worth another look.

1774: THE WORLD'S FIRST STAMP COLLECTION

The world's oldest stamp collection belongs to the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, Ireland. It's an album of revenue stamps and handstamped chargemarks compiled in 1774 by John Bourke, receiver general of the Stamp Duties. That was the year Ireland's Stamp Duty Act took effect, following similar taxes on legal documents that had begun in 1694 in England and Wales, and in 1707 in Scotland.

In the September-October 1993 issue of *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Joseph E. Foley (1936-2006) described the Bourke album as "handsomely bound in leather and tooled in gold ... in remarkably good condition." An inscription at the front reads, "A collection of the Impressions to be made on every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment or Every Sheet of Paper in Manner and Form as hereinafter expressed."

A motto in Latin, "*agnosco veteris vestigia flammae*" [I recognize traces of an old flame], followed the title. In Virgil's epic poem *Aeneid*, the Carthaginian queen Dido spoke those words about the wandering Trojan warrior Aeneas, who stirred passions she had not felt since her brother murdered her husband at Tyre many years earlier. Who would have guessed that the original stamp collection evoked romantic sentiments?

Bourke's dedication page to the revenue commissioners, dated May 20, 1774, referred to "the following

collection of Stamps," which he presented to them as "testimony of my Gratitude," presumably for his appointment to the office. Next, hand-ruled pages contain 12 denominations of embossed documentary and engraved almanac and newspaper tax stamps, followed by written explanations of their use.

Figure 1 shows the highest value, a £6 Crown and Arms of Ireland stamp, embossed on blue paper, fastened to page 1 of the album with a customary metal band. The £6 tax applied to these documents only: a dispensation to hold two ecclesiastical dignities or one of each, and to any other dispensation or faculty from the Lord Archbishop of Armagh or Master of the Faculties.

Other embossed revenue stamps of the same design on blue paper include £3, £2, 5-shilling, 2-shilling/6-penny, 1sh, 6p, 4p and 1p. Most versatile was the 6p stamp; the list of documents taxed at 6p required three pages of Bourke's writing. On the back of each album page featuring those stamps, the metal seals are covered with engraved cypher labels (security devices that prevented tampering or substitution of tax stamps) showing the crown and monogram of King George III.

Engraved printed stamps include 2p and 1p almanac stamps, and a ½p newspaper stamp. According to *The Newspaper & Almanac Stamps of Great Britain & Ireland* by John H. Chandler and H. Dagnall, the 1p almanac stamp in this collection is the only surviving example. The penny tax applied to each almanac or calendar printed on one side of a single sheet of paper, which helps explain why used examples of that denomination are unknown.

Figure 2 shows page 13 of the album, with an engraved 2p red almanac tax stamp at the top, followed by Bourke's description of its use. The 2p tax applied to every one-year almanac or calendar printed on more than one side of a sheet of paper. Only one stamp was required, regardless of the number of pages, but if the almanac or calendar included more than a



Figure 1. This 1774 first-issue £6 embossed revenue stamp of Ireland is fastened to page 1 of John Bourke's album by a metal seal, typical of early British Empire tax stamps.

single year, each additional year was taxed 2p more.

An unnumbered album page bearing impressions of handstamped chargemarks is shown in Figure 3. Users could bring their own parchment or paper to the Stamp Office to be marked, or could purchase those items at the office. Bourke's written text listed the prices charged by the Stamp Office for each product.

A small label attached to the inside of the album indicates that the book had been donated to the academy by Lord Moyne (Walter Edward Guinness, 1880-1944) in September 1934, a remarkable historical connection. Dublin-born Guinness, an heir to his family's brewery fortune, was a prominent British politician and crony of Winston Churchill. I'm not aware of any reports that he was a stamp collector, but he evidently did collect rare books of Irish interest.

During World War II, Moyne served as Great Britain's colonial secretary, and then as the resident minister in Cairo, where he was assassinated by members of the underground army Lehi, often called the Stern Gang, which fought to create a Jewish state in Palestine.

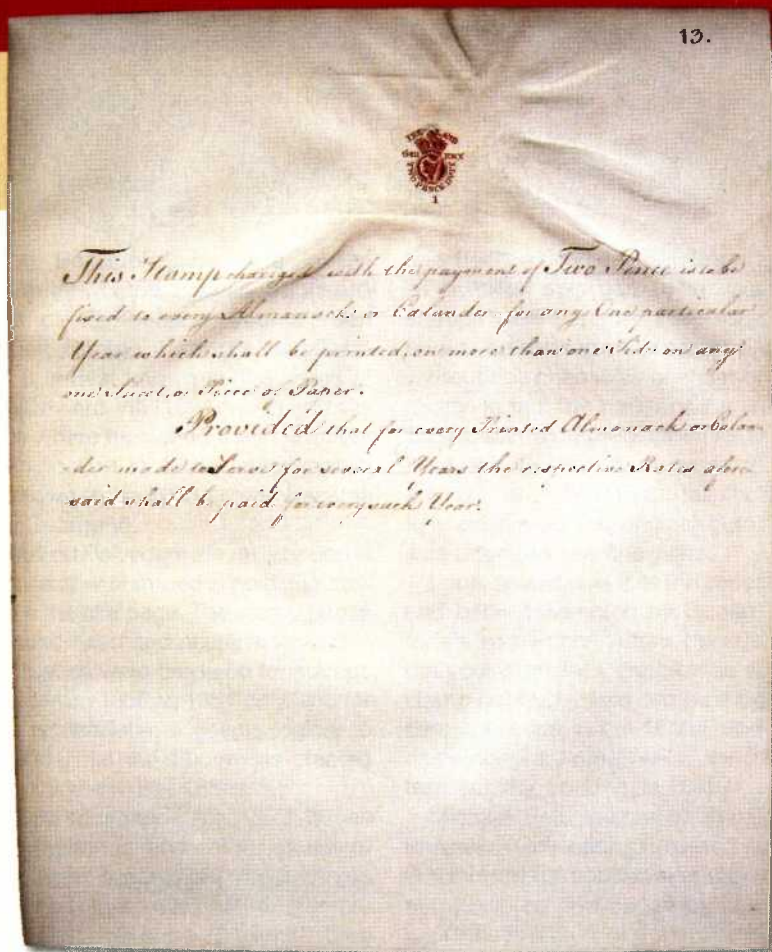


Figure 2. Page 13 of John Bourke's stamp album has an engraved 2-penny red almanac tax stamp at the top, followed by Bourke's written description of its use.

1840: C. BARRINGTON'S ALBUM AND COLLECTION

The renowned Irish collector and historian Frederick E. Dixon wrote, "Most philatelists collect only postage stamps, and think of 1840 as the date of the first stamps — the penny black and the twopenny blue. The oldest surviving collection in this sense is also in Dublin, an album in which a lady stuck examples of those first stamps, together with the printed envelope put on sale at the same time, designed by Irishman William Mulready. What makes the album special is that there is nothing later in it, suggesting that it was started at the time but — like many beginners' collections ever since — it was not continued."

Dixon's unpublished manuscript "Philately in Ireland," which included that report, was found among his effects when Christie's Robson Lowe sold the portion of his estate that documented the history of stamp collecting at an April 5, 1990, auction at Bournemouth. Victor Short published the article post-December 2009

humously in the October 1990-January 1991 issue of his journal *Philatelic Paraphernalia*. In the April-July 1991 issue, Short featured the 1840 collection.

Christie's summary for auction lot 22 described the collection as follows: "1840, an album containing 96 franked fronts 1795-1839 including the signatures of Wellington, Robert Peel, Daniel O'Connell and the Earl of Limerick, many addressed to or sent in Ireland with 1819 ABOVE WEIGHT, 1806 & 1807 dated FREE DUB, 1812 Irish Harp, and twenty other Irish types, last date 30.12.1839; an admission ticket to the Coronation of Queen Victoria, the front of a Mulready envelope and four unused caricatures; FINE UNUSED 1D BLACK (plate VII PB) and 2D BLUE (plate I CC, slight crease) and a used 1d black. Photo. Note: the album was compiled by Miss C. Barrington of Dublin, and this is probably the oldest known collection of postage stamps." The estimated value was £500; it sold for £1,650, including a 10 percent buyer's premium.

Short wrote that calling this the ear-

liest collection "is certainly a dangerous claim to make setting itself up to be challenged." The collection itself "is very well described. But what of the album? It has a marbled cover with a maroon leather spine and corner strengtheners. The spine is slightly damaged. Its dimensions are 238 x 196 [millimeters; height x width]." An insert reported that Ms. Barrington resided at St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, and at Clonmannon, County Wicklow. "MATTHEW BARRINGTON, to whom some fronts are addressed, as also the Coronation invitation, was Crown Solicitor for the Munster Circuit, and came from the Limerick family remembered in the name of the hospital."

Short observed that the "collection of franked fronts" was more correctly a "collection of autographs that just happen to be mainly free fronts." Only two of the album's 177 pages contained philatelic material. "Page 113 contains a used Mulready envelope front below which are mounted an unused 1d Black and 2d Blue and a used 1d Black (canceled with a red Maltese Cross, as is the Mulready). The stamps were originally stuck down, the used 1d Black remains so but the unused stamps have at one time been lifted. ...

"Pages 115 and 117 contain four spooner Mulready caricatures. ... So there we have it, a young ladies scrap book, autograph collection or the start of a stamp collection. I would like to think of Miss Barrington as a stamp collector but in truth the stamps, Mulready and caricatures were collected as novelties of 1840. Whatever your thoughts on the album it is an attractive item from the start of stamp collecting in its most simple form."

1850s: THE FORT BELVEDERE COLLECTION

If the earliest stamp albums and collections came from Ireland, the grandest of all was assembled and kept by members of the British royal family, although its exact provenance is unknown, and has been further obscured by promotional mythmaking. It was

unknown to the philatelic community until it came to auction two years ago.

On October 28, 2007, Christie's South Kensington held auction No. 5280, "The Sunday Sale — Property from the Collection of The Late The Hon. Mrs. Angela Lascelles." The estate sale included paintings, sculptures, china, linens, silver, jewelry, ceramics, furniture and similar expensive items.

Lot 124 included three albums of stamps. The illustration showed the covers of the three albums in small images, and facing pages of the early album that showed stamps of France, Württemberg, Denmark and Spain.

This was Christie's description of the lot: "AN ALL WORLD ACCUMULATION HOUSED IN THREE VOLUMES COMPRISING 1850-1857. Exquisite green leather bound album, privately made, containing mostly European unused classic stamps in poor to fair condition, majority with no margins but of fresh colour; Strand stamp album, affected by damp, with a selection of unused issues (some in blocks of four but mostly stuck down); and a partly-filled early printed album of used issues, etc. Condition variable."

Christie's lot notes added this: "The Royal Philatelic Collection began in 1865 and is, to this day, the world's most comprehensive collection of postage stamps devoted to Great Britain and the Commonwealth. The young Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII (1841-1910) and his younger brother Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh (1844-1900), were the first Royal philatelists.

"Their love of stamps was fostered in the next generation by King George V (1865-1936) who went on to become Executive President of what is now the Royal Philatelic Society, London, between the years 1896 and 1910. Indeed, the tradition lives on — continued by both King George VI (1895-1952) and by the present monarch, Queen Elizabeth II (b.1926)."

Christie's estimated the lot at £8,000-£10,000 (\$16,432-\$20,540), and it realized £16,100 (\$33,069), including buyer's premium. The sale was not reported in the philatelic media.



Figure 3. A page bearing impressions of handstamped chargemarks for taxes on parchment, blank paper and printed paper, followed by Bourke's list of the prices charged by the Stamp Office for each product. The album page itself is unnumbered.

Having sold its philatelic division as part of Spink in 2002, Christie's was ill-equipped to manage a stamp consignment of this importance. The lot description was inept and incomplete. The collection included rare, valuable items in top condition that were neither mentioned nor illustrated. The realization left more than \$300,000 in value on the table, to be pocketed by the next owner.

Almost a year later, on October 16, 2008, the Swiss auction firm Corinphila sold one item from that collection at Zurich, a magnificent unused pair of Austrian 6-kreuzer/30-centesimo yellow Mercury type 1b newspaper stamps, the 1851 first issue with original gum. The price realized was 262,900 Swiss francs (about \$250,000), including the buyer's premium. The stamps themselves have no printed denominations; the reported two-currency equivalent denominations reflect their postal validity in both Austria and Lombardy-Venetia.

Until this discovery, no unused multiples of the rare Yellow Mercury were known, and only two single examples with original gum had been reported. The stamps are a variety of Scott P2. Figure 4 shows the Yellow Mercury pair on its original album page, next to an unused pair of 0.6kr blue Mercury stamps of the same issue, Scott P1.

A five-page lavishly illustrated German-language article about the history of the collection from which this wonderful rarity originated, written by Karl-Albert Louis, the managing director of Corinphila, preceded the description.

Louis dubbed this "the royal collection discovery at Fort Belvedere," because it came from the estate of Angela Lascelles (1919-2007), who lived at that royal residence near London while married to Queen Elizabeth's first cousin, Gerald Lascelles (1924-1998). They had married in 1952 and divorced in 1978; she kept her residence at Fort Belvedere after their separation and remained close to the royal family.

Fort Belvedere was built in the 1750s for Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, younger son of King George II and Queen Caroline. It is best known as the home of King Edward VIII (1894-1972) and the place where he signed the Instrument of Abdication in 1936, which ceded the crown to his brother who became King George VI.

The Fort Belvedere album is bound in green leather stamped in gold. Figure 5 shows the title page. The stamp pages are hand ruled and neatly inscribed in ink. Spaces were prepared for stamps issued from 1850 to 1854 only, and for none issued later. It seems logical to conclude that the album was created in the middle to late 1850s.

Prepared spaces for 1852 issues of Netherlands and 1853 issues of Chile were empty, but most others contained their designated stamps. Figure 6 shows page 22 with all three spaces filled by United States stamps: the three imperforate regular issues of 1851, a 1¢ blue Benjamin Franklin stamp, Scott 9; a 3¢ dull red Washington, Scott 11; and a 12¢ black Washington, Scott 17.

On June 12, 2009, Corinthilia sold the final lot from the Fort Belvedere collection, a set of three embossed imperforate 1853 King Victor Emmanuel II second issue stamps of Sardinia (Scott 4-6) in unused strips of five: 5-centesimo on blue green paper, 20c on dull blue, and 40c on pale rose. The price realized was 191,200 francs (about \$173,000), including the buyer's premium. The catalog for that sale repeated Louis's article about the Fort Belvedere collection, this time in Italian.

Until the discovery of this set, no five-stamp multiples of the 5c and 20c denominations were known. The largest previously recorded were a 20c strip of four in the Thomas K. Tapling collection at the British Library and a 5c strip of three listed in the Italian Bolaffi catalog.

I asked Louis how the stamps from the Fort Belvedere collection could be described as "full original gum, without hinge." He replied, "The stamps

had been affixed to the album pages by their own gum. The valuable stamps were carefully lifted from the paper preserving full original gum without any chemicals or water or humidity. In fact the paper of the album pages was extremely carefully taken from the (gummed) reverse of the stamps, fiber by fiber. This method fully preserved the original gum that was dried out over the years."

Louis speculated that the collection had been assembled by Queen Victoria's son Prince Alfred because of the young prince's importance in the stamp hobby. He had owned a significant collection in the 1880s, and became honorary president of the Philatelic Society, London, in 1890.

Michael Sefi, keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection, provided additional historical context in response to my questions. He began by correcting Christie's as to the year the Royal Philatelic Collection actually began. "Prince Edward (later King Edward VII) and Prince Alfred (later Duke of Edinburgh) visited De La Rue's printing works in 1856, not 1865, when the two princes were presented with a pane or panes of the soon to be issued new sixpence stamp.

"In the late 1890s Prince Alfred, by then Duke of Edinburgh, sold his collec-

tion to his older brother Prince Edward (Prince of Wales and soon to be Edward VII), who promptly gave it over to his son the Duke of York (later to be Prince of Wales and then George V). George merged the Duke of Edinburgh's collection into his own but there is very little evidence in the present day collection of material which had its origins with the Duke of Edinburgh.

"Around 1906 the Prince of Wales (George) decided to focus his collection on Great Britain and Commonwealth, and disposed of those parts of his collection which were not Great Britain and Commonwealth. I have very few details of what was disposed of and no information as to how or when. While I do hold acquisition and disposal records from 1913, there are no instances of 'foreign' acquisitions nor sales and the presumption is that all foreign material had been disposed of well before then."

Sefi pointed out that "Gerald Lascelles was born in 1924, which is a good number of years after George V decided to dispose of his foreign stamp collections. That in turn leads to the presumption that if the 'Fort Belvedere' collection had ever been owned by Edward VII or George V, it was given to someone other than Gerald Lascelles, second son of the 6th Earl of



Figure 4. The bottom half of the Fort Belvedere album page for Austria contains unused pairs of newspaper stamps, including the rare Yellow Mercury issue that previously had not been known as a multiple. The unused pair of 0.6-kreuzer stamps (Scott P1) is from the same issue.

Harewood. The 6th Earl married Princess Mary, the daughter of George V, in 1922; again this is some years after the decision to exclude foreign material from this collection.

"If the 'Fort Belvedere' collection had ever been owned by George V, the likelihood would be that it, or parts of it, were given to Princess Mary and later ended up with Gerald Lascelles, her second son. But this is pure speculation, for which I have absolutely no evidence. The collection could just as easily have been formed by the 6th Earl of Harewood or his father — King George V was not the only prominent collector of the day — or even by Mrs. Lascelles' own family.

"I would be very wary at the moment about suggesting that the 'Fort Belvedere' collection had anything to do with the Royal Philatelic Collection as such, whatever Christie's or Corinphila might suggest. There is no evidence currently available to me that this might have been the case, so unless those companies have some documentary evidence, I have to assume that the provenance is unknown.

"There is of course a royal connection, in that Mrs. Lascelles had been married to (and divorced from) a grandson of King George V and that when married they had lived for a time in a property (Fort Belvedere) which they had leased from the royal family, or more likely from the Crown Estates, but that is hardly

evidence that the collection owned by Mrs. Lascelles ever had anything to do with the collection here."

The Fort Belvedere album and its less valuable contents are now owned by the German philatelic scholar and hobby historian Wolfgang Maassen, who is the editor of *Philatelie*. Maassen also owns a collection begun in about 1854 by a Swiss girl named Anna Elisabeth Tobler (1839-1863), who lived briefly in New York City as an adult, where she died. Unfortunately, her original album has not survived, if she had one.

Five generations of Tobler's descendants in Switzerland continued to build the collection. Maassen told the interesting story of that collection in the April 2009 issue of *Philatelie*. He exhibited the Fort Belvedere album and the Tobler collection at the Ibra international stamp exhibition at Essen this past May.

1855: THE DEJAEGER STAMP ALBUM

In the February 6, 1989, issue of *Linn's Stamp News*, Michael Schreiber reported, "A manuscript stamp album dated May 21, 1855, has come to light." His article went on to describe a small 108-page stamp album created by Charles DeJaeger of Gand (Ghent), Belgium, when he was 18 years old.

The album contained 315 stamps glued to pages of the book, plus two

loose stamps, including some "obvious fakes and other suspect stamps." Two leaves had been cut from the book, and 10 pages had stamp-size cutouts. Artfully drawn flags of nations or states that issued stamps decorated 22 of the pages.

Homer A. Alexson of Ohio, a descendant of DeJaeger, owned the book, which he called "the oldest, signed, titled and dated stamp album." The date is based on an inscription page, which, translated from French, reads, "Collection of Postage Stamps and Flags, Royal Institute of Horticulture, Gand, May 21, 1855," followed by the elegant signature of "C. DeJaeger."

Alexson provided his family tree, and explained to Schreiber that DeJaeger's father had been a celebrated horticulturist. He said that the father had trained the son to be one also. The younger DeJaeger went on to become an assistant postmaster in a nearby town, which gave him access to stamps, and to people who received stamps from afar.

DeJaeger carried the album wherever he went. After he accidentally drowned in 1868, his sister Leonie DeJaeger Bourgeois acquired the album and continued to build the collection, which she bequeathed to her daughter, Irma Bourgeois Wille. The daughter immigrated to Detroit in 1919, and later gave the album to her own daughter, Anne Wille.

Anne Wille gave the album to Alexson, her nephew, in October 1972. Beginning in the 1970s, Alexson had tried to attract interest in the album from the Smithsonian Institution and the Royal Philatelic Society London. The Smithsonian's curator of postal history expressed interest, but only if Alexson would donate the album.

Schreiber wrote that Alexson "tells a convincing story," but he cautioned, "The album deserves further study."

After Victor Short read Schreiber's report, he corresponded with Alexson, and published their exchange in the January-April 1989 issue of *Philatelic Paraphernalia*. Alexson wrote that he had received "correspondence and

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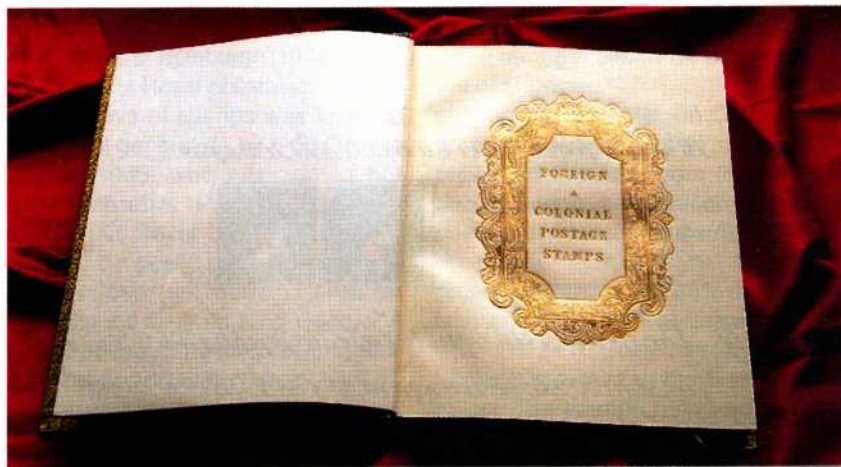


Figure 5. The opulent inscription "Foreign & Colonial Postage Stamps," lettered and framed in gold on the title page of the Fort Belvedere album, affirmed its royal origin.

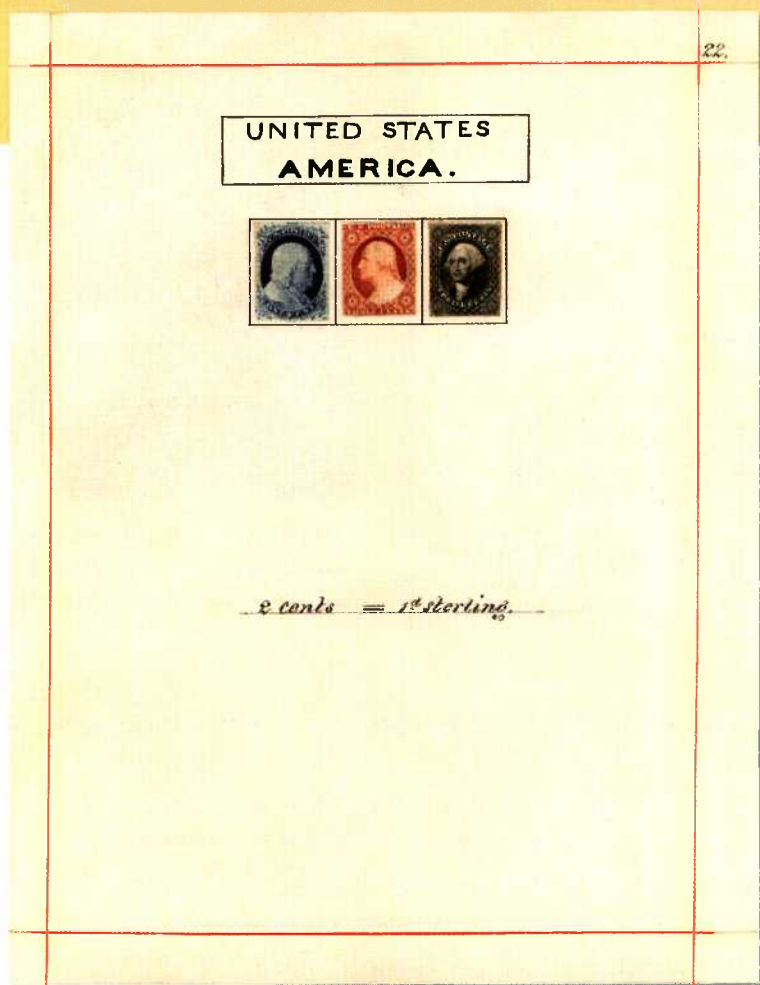


Figure 6. The United States page of the Fort Belvedere album includes the three imperforate regular issues of 1851: 1¢ Franklin (Scott 8), 3¢ Washington (Scott 11), and 12¢ Washington (Scott 17). The pages of the album are hand ruled and neatly inscribed in ink.

phone calls from around the world” as a consequence of the *Linn’s* article. “Taking into consideration the DeJaeger Album’s historical significance in relationship to philatelic history, the price is \$250,000 which includes all rights of the buyer to take out exclusive publishing copyrights and to receive all the royalties.”

Short replied that Alexson “has an over active imagination when it comes to its resale value.” In the October 1989 issue of *Philatelic Paraphernalia*, Short published additional observations by Bill Welch, editor of the *American Philatelist* at that time, who had examined the DeJaeger album at the Garfield-Perry March Party stamp show in Cleveland:

“I came away from the session with mixed impressions, and certainly a few reservations about the authenticity of the album, at least as regards its age.

I don’t doubt that the album has been in the DeJaeger family for some time, or that Mr. Alexson is knowledgeable about the family and its activities as from the 1840s. ... This album may well have held the collection of a DeJaeger. It might even have held a collection formed by Charles DeJaeger, drowned July 19, 1868; some of the Spiro forgeries contained in the album were available in the mid-1860s.

“However, the claim for the album’s being started in 1855 is slim — resting solely on the manuscript date on the title page. I am not an expert on book restoration/repair/enhancement, but it appears to me that the title page is a lamination — unlike any of the other pages in the book. That is, the title page is firmly affixed to the leaf behind it.

“Also, anyone examining the book with an eye to authenticating the date of origin would also have to wonder

about the missing portion of the front fly-leaf, the portion that one might expect to bear an inscription of ownership, date, etc.” Welch also noted that Alexson’s asking price “is approximately 100 times that brought by a fine example of the first United States stamp album, sold by Christie’s Robson Lowe in New York last year.”

To my knowledge, the DeJaeger album has not been seen in philatelic circles for the past 20 years. In recent correspondence Schreiber wrote, “If it ever resurfaces, someone really needs to study it.”

Another album of similar vintage was part of the Dixon estate, lot 23 of the previously mentioned 1990 Christie’s sale, described as “C. 1855, a deluxe album with recessed spaces for 72 stamps, most of which including G.B. 1840 1d. and 2d. are defective.”

Short wrote, “It is certainly an early album but bore no wording or date. Personally I doubt if its original purpose was as a stamp album. The circa date is pure speculation. The collection is nearly all mounted with stamp hinges. There are no signs of it being an old stuck down collection that has been added to.”

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF DAVID T. LATIMER

No one has yet come forward with an older American collection than the 35 imperforate 3¢ Washington stamps of 1851, Scott 11 and 11A, pasted onto the inside front cover of a German language textbook in about February 1856, first reported in my Spotlight column in the August issue of *Scott Stamp Monthly*. With the help of readers skilled in genealogical and military research, I have learned interesting facts about the boy who gathered and kept them.

From 1853 to 1857, David Teford Latimer of Plainfield, New Jersey, had been a pupil at Nazareth Hall at Nazareth, Pennsylvania, a boarding school for boys affiliated with the Moravian Church. He acquired the German book in October 1855. He was probably 12 or 13 years old when he as-

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Figure 7. Union Army soldiers of the 5th New York Volunteer Infantry (Duryea's Zouaves) carrying away the body of a slain comrade from the Big Bethel battlefield, where young stamp collector David Latimer fell. Latimer enlisted as a private in the regiment at the outset of the Civil War.

sembled the stamp collection that he kept in the book.

At the outset of the Civil War, Latimer enlisted as a private in the 5th New York Volunteer Infantry of the Union Army, also known as Duryea's Zouaves, called "red-legged devils" for their col-

orful red bloused trousers. The 5th New York fought at the Battle of Big Bethel in southeast Virginia, where Latimer was killed June 10, 1861. Figure 7 shows soldiers of Duryea's regiment carting away the body of a slain comrade from the Big Bethel battlefield.

Captain Bradegee, a veteran of that battle, later recalled, "On the march the company to which David belonged was deployed as skirmishers, and while thus engaged with the enemy he received a rifle bullet in the shoulder. He fell; but bleeding and in agony, his brave heart

Palo

Close-up view of a
Palo color page.

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buoyed him up, and he rose to his knees as if to be his own avenger. An officer told him to lie down, and even as he spoke another bullet crashed through his brain, and he fell dead. A brave man and an honest soldier; his friends, while they deeply mourn his early death, can but feel a swelling pride to think how glorious was his fall."

Seven years later, Nazareth Hall erected a monument to its fallen war heroes, including Latimer, "the first of the alumni who fell in defense of the union." On June 11, 1868, the school dedicated the 35-foot high obelisk, with Latimer's name among those on the north face above this inscription: "The Academy is the nursing-mother of patriots, rearing her children in the ways of truth and freedom."

This pioneer stamp collector had gone to his reward before philatelic catalogs, albums, publications or or-

ganizations had been born. The survival of his collection today is all the more remarkable considering Latimer's untimely death in service to his country.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF OUR HOBBY

Finally, let us ponder the legacy of John Bourke's Latin literary flourish. Virgil's "old flame" line in the *Aeneid* opened an extended metaphor of burning passion for the year that Aeneas and Dido were lovers at Carthage, an initial spark that ended in a tragic conflagration. When Aeneas abandoned her to resume his destiny, the distraught African queen took her own life atop a pyre, departing this world in a blaze of glory.

It has now been 235 years since Bourke assembled the oldest stamp collection. The end of stamp collecting is not yet in sight, and those of each

generation who predict its demise are not prone to imagining a final fiery fadeout. But most of us who carry on, and most new recruits, are imbued with passion for our hobby. The tradition of mature adults rediscovering a childhood pastime does resemble an encounter with an old flame. In that respect, Bourke was not only a founder, but also perhaps a prophet.

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