



BC Philatelic Society Newsletter

Bringing stamp and postal-history collectors together since 1919

The BC Philatelic Society — Always on-line at www.bcphilatelic.org

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The Southern Cross: the first "star" on a stamp — by Bob Ingraham



▲ The world's first "astrostamp" (a stamp featuring an astronomical subject) was issued by Brazil in 1887. It pictures the constellation Crux Australis (the Southern Cross). The astronomically accurate design includes the star Epsilon Crucis.



▲ In the late 1800s and early 1900s, New South Wales issued several stamps featuring its coat of arms, which in turn includes the "Southern Cross" constellation, without the star Epsilon Crucis.



▲ Wide-field photo of the Crux (Southern Cross) constellation. The dark area at the lower left in the photo is the Coalsack Dark Nebula. (Wikipedia Commons photo courtesy of #NASkies)

Britain's Penny Black of 1840, the world's first adhesive postage stamp, featured a likeness of the young Queen Victoria. Its design set the stage for thousands of stamps issued worldwide over the next few decades: only rarely did new stamps feature anything but portraits of famous people, national coats of arms, allegorical or mythological figures, or numerals to indicate value.

Exceptions included Canada's 3-pence "Beaver," issued in 1851, which featured a... beaver! The United States Pictorial Issue of 1869 featured a Pony Express rider, a locomotive, and a steam/sailing ship, among others, but was soon replaced by a set of stamps picturing... famous people!

It could be said that all of the world's stamps issued in the four decades from the Penny Black's

emergence were Aristotelean: they reflected nothing but the earth-centred experiences of civilization. An alien civilization studying an early stamp collection might say, "These beings knew nothing of the Universe! How primitive!" That changed in 1887, when Brazil issued the first stamp featuring an astronomical subject, the constellation Crux Australis, commonly known as the Southern Cross, the most readily identifiable constellation of the Southern Hemisphere.

Until 1889, Roman Catholicism was the official religion of Brazil, so it's not surprising that the Christian cross might be symbolized on a stamp. However, the Southern Cross as represented on the stamp is not simply symbolic: it is a scientifically accurate representation which includes the star Epsilon Crucis, set off right of centre in most images of the constellation.

this issue

- The Southern Cross: the first "star" on a stamp
- Field service postcards
- Where are the designers?

And more...

Many subsequent stamp issues, especially of countries in the Southern Hemisphere, have featured the Southern Cross. Most of those in my collection, like the first "astrostamp," include Epsilon Crucis, but some do not. Examples of the latter are stamps featuring the coat of arms of New South Wales, which incorporates a symbolic representation of the Southern Cross without Epsilon Crucis.

Field Service Post Cards — by Bob Ingraham

On August 9, 1914, the British Expeditionary Force of 80,000 men began embarking for France under a cloak of secrecy. They would face more than a million German soldiers.

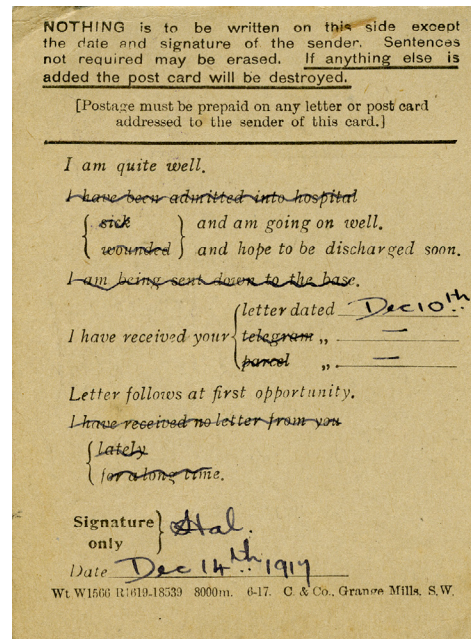
The day before, the Defence of the Realm Act gave the government coercive censorship powers; new standing orders forbade soldiers to reveal military information to anyone. Field Service Post Cards supplied to soldiers appear to have been one of the tools used to ensure the soldiers' compliance.

The pre-printed postcards included six sentences which soldiers could choose to describe their circumstances; sentences which didn't apply were simply scratched out. The postcards included a warning that the postcards would be destroyed if soldiers wrote more than the address, their signature, and the date.

Early Field Service Post Cards had a one-pence stamp imprinted on them. Later, free postage for

soldiers was introduced. Buff-coloured Field Service Post Cards seem to have been the most common type, but other colours were produced. Other Allied nations, as well as prisoners of war, used similar postcards.

At first the postcards were rationed to two a week, but later were issued on request and were in great demand during periods of heavy fighting. In the autumn of 1917, soldiers posted more 285,000 a day. Nearly identical postcards were used by Allied forces in the Second World War.



WHERE ARE THE DESIGNERS? — by Trevor Larden

For one who is interested in the design and designers of stamps, etc., - hence my 'David Gentleman' and 'Derren Carman,' and 'Fritz Connection' - it is a tough road to hoe.

Scott Catalogues, needless to say, have nothing. Scott Specialized for the U.S. may list the designers; I have not checked. I have the Gibbons for Australia and New Zealand. Yes, they do list the designers - but why initials only for the men (F.D. Manley) but full

names for women, (Eileen Mayo) - a funny sort of discrimination. I have Alec A. Rosenblum's highly detailed and specialized book up to 1947 - 8 on Australia; pretty well everything you want to know, and then some, but no designers.

I also have a very detailed Swiss book on stamps, I believe, by the Swiss stamp dealers; details galore, but no designers. Fortunately, I can draw upon Fritz Graf who can assist me with

designers. Unitrade, for Canada; Bale, for Israel, and the various Gibbons (not simplified) for Britain, are pretty good, and the men as well as the women have names.

Many of the stamps I collect have names at the bottom, see illustrations; certainly some Britain, Swiss and Austria, but you would need a magnifying glass to see them. By and large it seems that designers were given short shrift.



BC PHILATELIC:

- **Philatelic Daffynitions Bob Ingraham:**
Stamp Catalogue — (1) A book used to help collectors justify their hobby to their partners. (2) A book sometimes submitted as evidence in divorce proceedings.

Stamp Shop — A retail outlet for philatelic collectibles and supplies, identical in function to your standard crack house.

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