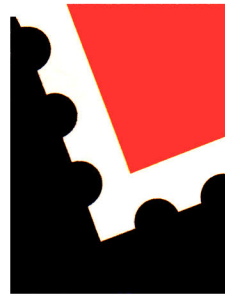


Linn's Stamp News

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WORLD'S LARGEST WEEKLY STAMP NEWS AND MARKETPLACE

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\$2.50 U.S.

34¢ Happy Birthday stamp to begin spreading cheer Feb. 8 at APS Ameristamp show in Riverside, Calif.

By Charles Snee

The United States Postal Service will capitalize on one annual event that all people have in common — a birthday — when it issues its 34¢ Happy Birthday stamp in a few weeks.

The stamp will be issued at the American Philatelic Society's Ameristamp Expo show in Riverside, Calif., Feb. 8.

It will be the third U.S. Happy Birthday stamp to be issued in the past 15 years and the first since 1988.

Preliminary USPS artwork for the new Happy Birthday stamp, which will be issued in self-adhesive panes of 20, is illustrated in color on this page.

The Postal Service stated that Happy Birthday panes may be broken apart by postal clerks so that stamps may be sold individually.

This practice has become quite common for new U.S. stamps during the past two years or so. Postal Service of-



The 34¢ Happy Birthday stamp, which will be issued Feb. 8 in Riverside, Calif., is the third Happy Birthday stamp to be issued by the United States Postal Service in the past 15 years.

officials believe it promotes over-the-counter sales of stamps.

An official first-day ceremony is planned for noon at the Riverside Convention Center, 3443 Orange St., in Riverside.

The Happy Birthday design was the only one supplied by

the Postal Service when it publicly unveiled its 2002 commemorative stamp program Aug. 24, 2001, during a press conference held in conjunction with the APS Stampshow in Chicago.

Linn's first pictured the Happy Birthday design in the issue of Sept. 10, 2001.

The new Happy Birthday stamp features colorful confetti and "Happy Birthday" in bold, block letters arranged in a continuous spectrum of color that shifts from yellow-green on the left to orange on the right.

Harry Zelenko of New York City designed the image, while USPS manager of stamp development Terry McCaffrey was the art director.

As typographer, John Boyd (also of New York City) was responsible for selecting and arranging the kind and size of the type for the letters and numbers used in the design of the Happy Birthday stamp.

When the Happy Birthday design was first revealed in August 2001, McCaffrey stated that the stamp would be kept on sale indefinitely and that the denomination would be changed to accommodate future rate increases.

As such, the Happy Birthday stamp can be classified as a so-called special stamp.

Special stamps typically are created in larger quantities and remain on sale for longer periods than commemorative stamps. The U.S. Love stamps, Christmas stamps and

other stamps issued for holidays are special stamps.

Because the Postal Service is pushing hard for a rate hike that could go into effect as early as June 2, the denomination of the Happy Birthday stamp might not remain 34¢ for long.

In fact, if postal rates do go up in early June, the 34¢ Happy Birthday stamp will see

new Happy Birthday stamp is so wonderful.

"No famous people, historical event or significant year date will be depicted on the Happy Birthday stamp," wrote Dean Woolsey in an Oct. 8, 2001, Readers' Opinions letter.

A few Linn's readers responded to Woolsey with favorable comments in Read-

Vote today in stamp poll

Remember to vote in Linn's annual Stamp Popularity Poll. The ballot is on page 54 in this issue. United States stamps and postal stationery issued during 2001 were pictured in color in Linn's Dec. 17, 2001, issue on pages 30-31. Stamp poll voting continues until March 4.

You can also vote online at www.linns.com.

just four months of stand-alone use on letters.

The Postal Service seems to have anticipated this possibility, because it ordered an initial print run of just 75 million stamps from contract printer Avery Dennison.

Even so, the stamp likely will be popular. After all, it's a natural choice when sending someone a birthday card.

But not everyone thinks the

ers' Opinions letters that appeared in the issue of Oct. 29, 2001.

"If Christmas, Halloween and Valentine's Day merit special stamps, either directly or indirectly, surely a birthday — something we all have in common — is worthy of recognition on a stamp," opined Sandra Ralph.

Similar sentiments came (Please turn to page 14)

U.S. Postal Service gearing up to irradiate much of the mail

By Rick Miller

If and when it comes, the general irradiation of personal mail could be bad news for stamp collectors who do business by mail.

The United States Postal Service hopes to eventually install electron-beam irradiation devices at about 260 major processing and distribution facilities across the country, according to Postal Service spokesman Gerry Kreienkamp.

The Postal Service already has purchased eight of the devices from the Surebeam Corp., a subsidiary of the Titan Corp., at a cost of \$40 million (\$5 million each). It has an option to buy an additional 12 units.

Titan Corp., based in California, also owns the Lima, Ohio, facility that was contracted by the Postal Service for irradiation of anthrax-contaminated mail.

The actual number of mail zappers the Postal Service is able to install will depend on how much money is appropriated for that purpose by Congress.

Congress recently approved only \$500,000 for the Postal Service to combat anthrax as opposed to the \$6 billion that

Postmaster General John E. "Jack" Potter asked for, so it may be awhile before it is able to purchase enough of the devices to carry out its plans.

As reported in the Jan. 7 Linn's, all mail addressed to government agencies in the District of Columbia is already being irradiated prior to delivery.

Although the Postal Service intends to vastly expand the use of irradiation of mail, it says that it does not intend to irradiate corporate mail or bulk mail that comes from known senders.

"The contents are known, the preparation is known, we know how much of it there is. That's the bulk of the mail we deal with. It's not the stuff you drop off at the mailbox," said Kreienkamp.

Kreienkamp also said that irradiation would not cause delivery delays because it would be incorporated as a normal step in the mail delivery process.

The use of irradiation to kill anthrax spores or other pathogens contained in the mails is fraught with problems from the point of view of stamp collectors and dealers.

It takes 10 times as much radiation to kill an anthrax

spore in a letter as it does to zap E. coli bacteria in a hamburger patty. The level of irradiation used on the mail is 1,000 times higher than levels used for human cancer treatments.

The irradiation devices function by shooting out electrons at nearly the speed of light. The beam of electrons is magnetically manipulated to sweep it over the material it is sanitizing.

Irradiation kills bacteria by scrambling its DNA. An electron beam can kill an E. coli bacterium in less than a second, but it takes about a minute to kill an anthrax spore.

The effect of such irradiation on most paper collectibles, including postage stamps, covers and other ephemera is disastrous, based on recent anecdotal evidence.

If the Postal Service has its way and begins routine irradiation of personal, noncorporate mail, collectors and dealers would have to find other ways to ship their stamps and covers.

At least two batches of mail being irradiated in 2001 burst into flames and burned during the process. In mail that does (Please turn to page 41)

New 37¢ first-class letter rate expected to take effect June 30

By Bill McAllister
Washington Correspondent

Expect the next postal rate increase — to 37¢ for a first-class domestic letter and correspondingly higher rates for other classes of mail — to take effect June 30.

That's the word postal officials were spreading Jan. 4 after disclosing that most of the nation's large mailers had agreed to the rate increase that the United States Postal Service approved Sept. 11, 2001.

While the mailers generally do not use first-class mail to send their advertising pieces, they represent a powerful lobby that could delay a postal-rate hike if their cooperation were not enlisted.

The settlement is expected to be approved by the Postal Service's board of governors at its Jan. meeting in Washington.

If endorsed by the Postal Rate Commission, the settlement could become effective

June 30, giving the USPS several months of added revenues.

Mailers who do not approve the higher rates will have until Jan. 18 to file objections with the rate commission. Postal officials say they expect a decision from the rate commission, which last year urged a negotiated settlement of the case, by March 25.

If the expedited settlement is not approved by the commission, it would be October at the earliest before the higher rates could be imposed. That delay, postal officials said, would certainly push the Postal Service into much greater debt than the \$1.7 bil-

lion deficit it was projecting before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Those attacks, the economic slowdown and the Postal Service's response to anthrax letters are cutting postal revenues and adding much higher security costs to processing the mail.

Mailers said they agreed to the early imposition of the \$6.1 billion in higher postage rates because they know that the Postal Service's finances have been devastated by the terrorist attacks and they are fearful that yet another rate increase may lie ahead as the USPS attempts to deal with its rising costs. ■

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Collecting Queen Elizabeth's Hong Kong

Specializing in collecting Hong Kong's Queen Elizabeth II stamp issues offers the collecting challenge of numerous listed and unlisted varieties. Important errors including

Asia

By Michael Rogers

double prints and minor distinctions, such as misplaced colors and missing strokes, abound.

Most of this material is not expensive. Fine collections can be built with patience and careful study.

Upon Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, the British Crown Colonies issued commemorative stamps with a common design. The Hong Kong 10¢ QEII Coronation commemorative stamp is shown in Figure 1.

While some of the other colonies quickly released new definitive stamps bearing the queen's portrait, Hong Kong did not do so until Jan. 5, 1954. This was because it was deemed impractical to destroy the large inventories of the King George VI definitive stamps that remained on hand.

In 1954 Hong Kong issued 12 denominations of QEII definitive stamps denominated 5¢ through \$10.

The 1954 definitives show the queen in left profile and are inscribed with "Hong Kong" and the stamp's denomination in English and Chinese.

In 1960 two additional values of 65¢ and \$1.30 were added when rates changed.

Printed in sheets of 100 on paper watermarked script CA and perforated gauge 14, these stamps seem straightforward and uncomplicated. But



Figure 1. Hong Kong 10¢ Queen Elizabeth II Coronation commemorative stamp.



Figure 2. A block of six Hong Kong \$2 QEII ocher-omitted color-missing-error definitive stamps.

F.W. Webb's Hong Kong opus, *Philatelic and Postal History of Hong Kong*, and Yang's color *Postage Stamp & Postal History Catalogue of Hong Kong* reveal many opportuni-

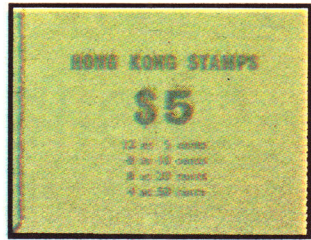


Figure 3. Hong Kong \$5 definitive stamp booklet with olive-green cover.



Figure 4. Hong Kong \$2 Diamond Jubilee of Scouting stamp, Scott 264. The stamp on the left is normal. The black printing is doubled on the stamp on the right.

ties for the specialist.

Scott lists only one error. In immaculate very fine, never-hinged condition, the 5¢ QEII imperforate pair, Scott 185a, is worth every bit of the Scott \$2,250 valuation.

Quite a few of these pairs are found wrinkled with very close margins. The sheet of stamps from which the 5¢ imperforate errors come was not entirely imperforate, so multiples are also found partially perforated.

Both Webb and Yang list numerous 1954 varieties, such as broken Chinese characters, extra strokes, inverted watermarks, and shades, with many illustrated by Yang.

First-day covers of the complete 1954 12-stamp set are valued by Yang at Hong Kong \$5,000 (about U.S. \$650).

First-day covers for the two additional stamps issued in 1960 are valued by Yang at Hong Kong \$700 (about U.S. \$91).

Condition is crucially important in order to realize the best prices. Covers must be cached and not toned or creased.

Varieties of the majority of all QEII Hong Kong definitive and commemorative stamps exist.

Because Scott does not catalog these most interesting flaws, careful examination of stamp stocks can be most rewarding. Most dealers are

oblivious to their existence and may have undiscovered treasure lurking in their inventories.

The golden jubilee of the University of Hong Kong was celebrated with a \$1 stamp in 1961. A few are known missing the gold color.

The Hong Kong post office initiated official first-day covers in 1962. Not many of these early first-day covers were processed, so they are elusive and in demand.

Hong Kong issued a three-stamp set to commemorate the centennial of its first stamps issued in 1862. Many varieties



Figure 5. Top margin Hong Kong \$1.30 QEII definitive stamp, Scott 284. The printing extending above the perforations in the selvage is normal for this stamp.

of these stamps exist.

A major variety is the 10¢ stamp missing the word, "Postage." It is collected in strips of five comprising four normal stamps and one error stamp.

The 20¢ stamp is found with the words "Postage Stamp Cent" and the queen's portrait partially omitted.

Retouches and broken characters are known on this stamp. These are interesting though not of great value.

The second set of Hong Kong QEII definitive stamps was completely redesigned, using the Annigoni portrait of the queen.

The 15-stamp set issued in 1962, Scott 203-17 shows the watermark in an upright position. All but the \$10 stamp were issued again in 1966-72 with the watermark sideways, Scott 203b-17a. The Yang catalog notes a third issue printed on glazed paper in 1971-73.

Specialists delight in the Annigoni portrait QEII definitive stamps. Watermark, paper and gum varieties abound. Some dramatic major errors are inexpensive. Stamps are known with colors inverted, omitted or widely shifted. Some stamps with inverted watermarks are only slightly more expensive than normal stamps. The 1966 10¢ QEII definitive stamp exists imperforate.

A corner block of six \$2 QEII ocher-omitted color-missing definitive stamps is shown in Figure 2.

This error is most easily recognized by the missing ocher plate number. The block appears otherwise normal because the ocher is a minor feature in the design. The ocher-omitted variety is common and valued by the Yang catalog at around 150 percent of the value for the normal stamp.

The \$2 and \$5 face value booklets released in 1965 were the first Hong Kong stamp booklets released since 1912.

The \$2 booklet has an orange-brown cover with 5¢ and 10¢ stamps comprising eight

panes of four stamps each.

The \$5 booklet is known with both yellow-green and olive-green covers with combinations of 5¢, 10¢ and 50¢ stamps in booklet panes of four. The cover of the olive-green booklet is shown in Figure 3.

Crown Colony common design commemoratives honoring Freedom from Hunger, the Red Cross, ITU, International Cooperation Year, Sir Winston Churchill, World Health Organization and UNESCO were released by Hong Kong during 1963-66.

Beginning in 1967, each lunisolar New Year holiday stamp depicted a different animal. The year 1967 is the Year of the Ram (Scott 234-5); 1968 the Year of the Monkey (Scott 237-38) and so on. In later years, booklets and souvenir sheets accompanied most New Year issues.

A sharp eye catches the black doubled on the 1971 \$2 Diamond Jubilee of Scouting commemorative stamp. A normal stamp is shown on the left in Figure 4. The double-printing variety is shown on the right.

A new QEII definitive 14-stamp set was issued in 1973 on block CA watermarked paper, Scott 275-88.

A top margin copy of the \$1.30 QEII stamp from this set, Scott 284, is shown in Figure 5. The printing extends above the stamp's perforations and into the selvage on these stamps. This is normal and not a printing error.

Stamps of this design were issued again in 1973-78 on script CA watermarked paper, Scott 275a-88a, and again on unwatermarked paper in 1976-77.

The Scott catalog recognizes the two different watermarks as independent sets while the Yang catalog gives each variety a separate catalog number.

The inevitable shades, inverted watermarks, and thin or thick papers make these definitives quite interesting.

Few post-1972 issues have broken characters or other minor flaws. Occasional major errors are known. Watermark positioning continued to be problematic for the printers.

The 1974 10¢ UPU commemorative stamp without watermark, Scott 299a, is fair-



Figure 6. Hong Kong 1974 Arts Festival souvenir sheet.



Figure 7. Hong Kong Skyline souvenir sheet, Scott 778a.

ly scarce.

Hong Kong's first two souvenir sheets accompanied the 1974 Arts Festival and the 1975 Festivals commemorative stamps. The 1974 Arts Festival souvenir sheet shown in Figure 6, Scott 298a, features Chinese Opera Masks.

Both of these souvenir sheets are hard to find, as insufficient quantities were laid aside for future collectors.

Redesigned definitives in 1982-87 were issued watermarked, Scott 388-403, and unwatermarked, Scott 388a-403a. The 1982 \$5-\$50 definitive stamps are known watermarked to the left instead of upright.

A set of 15 Machin definitive stamps was issued July 13, 1987. The initial issue of these stamps had dark shading under the queen's chin. They were issued again Sept. 1, 1988, with lighter shading under the chin and with the addition of \$1.40 and \$1.80 denominations.

The lighter shading values were again issued with year dates 1989, 1990 and 1991 printed in the lower-right corner. Many stamps of the 1989 and 1990 series are known with the black doubled.

The Yang catalog offers more detailed listings of the Machin definitive stamps of Hong Kong than does the Scott catalog.

The 10¢ National Flag and 50¢ Map of Hong Kong coil stamps were issued undated in 1987, then issued again with the 10¢ stamp bearing "1989" and the 50¢ stamp bearing "1990." Additional Map of Hong Kong stamps arrived in 1992.

Redesigned Machin definitive stamps were issued during 1992-96. Some have one- or two-bar phosphorescent tagging on the face.

Coil rolls of 1,000 are noted in the Yang catalog for many values. A number is printed on the gum of every fifth coil



Figure 8. Framas for the Year of the Dragon (left) and New Year Carp (right).

stamp. Most collectors seek out numbered strips of five.

New Hong Kong Skyline definitive stamps were issued Jan. 26, 1997: a set of 16 stamps plus four souvenir sheets of one and one souvenir sheet of three stamps. The souvenir sheet of three, Scott 778a, is shown in Figure 7. The queen's likeness does not appear on these stamps.

Hong Kong resumed issuing souvenir sheets in 1981. More than 50 appeared in the years from 1985 until China regained Hong Kong in July 1997. Most were issued singly. Some souvenir sheets were issued as booklets.

Hong Kong began to issue electronic postage labels, known as Framas in 1986, using lunisolar New Year animals for the central design. Two Framas, a 60¢ Year of the Dragon and 10¢ Carp (a traditional New Year symbol) are shown in Figure 8.

Aerograms, registered envelopes, and nondominated picture postal cards offer wide variety with few expensive items. Many aerogram errors exist.

These and fancy cancellations are all Yang-identified.

Yang's *Postage Stamp & Postal History Catalogue of Hong Kong* is published every few years, and usually costs \$20 U.S. F.W. Webb's *Philatelic and Postal History of Hong Kong* was reprinted by the Royal Philatelic Society of London in 1991 and 1994. It fetches about \$150.

Hong Kong returned to the People's Republic of China July 1, 1997, thus ending 135 years of British Colonial postage stamps. ■