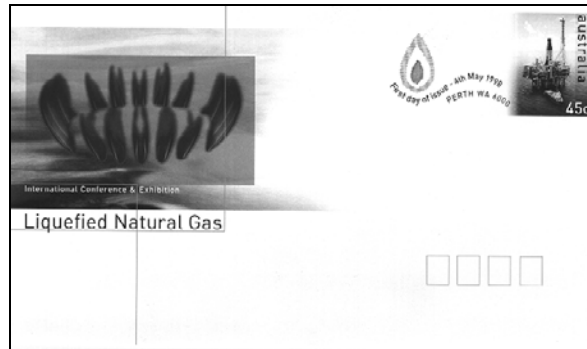


## ***COLLECTING POSTAL STATIONERY***



Postal Stationery is stationery issued by the postal authorities which has an impressed stamp indicating the prepayment of a postal service. Usually the imprinted stamp will indicate the value of the postage paid although many modern issues just have an indication that postage has been paid. The most familiar are stamped envelopes, aerogrammes, stamped postcards, letter cards, and newspaper wrappers.

There are many other types of stationery used by post offices which do not represent payment for a postal service. These are, of course, collectable, although they are not, strictly speaking, Postal Stationery. Among them are cards, envelopes, and aerogramme forms to which adhesives must be affixed. Likewise picture post cards are not Postal Stationery if they do not have an impressed stamp.

The first Australian postal stationery was the Sydney lettersheets issued by New South Wales in 1838, two years before the first adhesive postage stamps were issued by the British Post Office.

The hobby of collecting Postal Stationery issues began almost immediately after 1840, and was exceedingly popular by 1900. The early major catalogues all included stationery. After the First World War, it declined in popularity but, beginning in 1945, there has been a marked revival of interest.

### **Why Collect Postal Stationery?**

For those who wish to extend their philatelic and historical knowledge, Postal Stationery offers an excellent opportunity. They can expand their knowledge of the types and methods of manufacture of cards as well as paper, of printing methods, and of design. Since stationery items are larger than adhesives, it is easier to study many of the features through them rather than through other branches of Philately.

Postal Stationery is also an important addition to the collection of adhesives. A country collection without its stationery is incomplete. Thematic collectors who neglect to include the colourful stationery relating to their topic leave significant gaps in their collection.

The messages on the backs of postal cards and on letter sheets are important historical documents. Through them one can trace the changing customs of people as well as opinions of the writers on an infinite variety of subjects.

When collecting Postal Stationery, missing perforations, centering, and gum sticking are less of a problem than when collecting adhesives. Furthermore, the items collected are sturdier, and less subject to careless damage than are adhesives.

For the most part postal authorities have issued stationery strictly for utilitarian purposes. Very few countries have used it to exploit the unwary collector. Forgeries of stationery exist, but they are not common and are usually easily detected.

## **How To Collect Postal Stationery**

Most people receive items of Postal Stationery in their mail every week; and if these are saved, a small but interesting collection will soon accumulate. Auction houses dispose of stationery, either as single rare items, in groups, or in sizable collections. There are fewer dealers of stationery than of adhesives since there are fewer collectors, but there are enough to provide good sources of material at competitive prices.

A few hints on collecting Postal Stationery may answer some of the beginner's questions:

1. All stationery should be saved entire. While in earlier days 'cut squares' were collected the modern trend is against collecting postal stationery that way.
2. There are albums available, such as those used for first day covers. Many collectors make their own albums with a binder of their choice and light cardboard or heavy archival paper pages.
3. Even though stationery is not as fragile as are adhesives, care should be taken to keep it in as fine a condition as possible. Hinges should never be used to mount Postal Stationery, as they tend to disfigure the specimens. Corner mounts, similar to those used for snapshots (but preferably larger and of clear acetate) should be used instead. A number of brands are available – consult a dealer in stamp accessories or, if necessary, a photographic accessories supplier.

Some collectors and dealers write catalogue numbers and other information on Postal Stationery specimens. These should be done only when absolutely necessary and then only on the back, and very lightly with a soft pencil. Rare items may be banded with thin paper bands on which the necessary information can be written.

4. Some collectors prefer mint copies, since they present a clean, neat appearance. Others prefer postally used ones, which often are interesting for the postal markings and messages on them. Some collectors try to obtain a specimen of each.
5. Catalogues are as necessary for Postal Stationery as for adhesives. They are the most convenient source of information regarding size and date of issue, size of perforations of letter cards, kind of envelope flaps (called "knives"), design, watermarks, and purpose of issue.

## **Exhibiting Postal Stationery**

Because of the unique and colorful character of much Postal Stationery, it often attracts more attention in stamp exhibits than other philatelic material. Exhibitors have the pleasure of showing their collections to an interested audience, as well as matching their skill in the selection, mounting, and explanations of their material with other collectors.

It is by no means necessary to have a collection of rare and unusual items to have a winning exhibit. While rarity is one factor with the judges in most shows, there are many other things which are equally important, such as: skill in presentation, clarity of explanations, and ingenuity in the conception and organization of the exhibit.

The preparation of Postal Stationery for exhibit presents special problems; but these offer an interesting challenge, and they are by no means insurmountable. The art of mounting stationery, with its larger pieces than adhesives, and of writing it up is one that can be learned only by practice, and by studying exhibits of other collectors.

## **Further Information**

Serious collectors are almost inevitably led to search for information about their collection. They will want to know when the items were issued, how to distinguish varieties, and why the postal administration issued them. This will open a door to a fascinating realm of information about the customs, governments,

economics, and life in different countries. They will soon find that they would like to know about differences in paper and card stock and various methods of printing.

The literature of Postal Stationery is very extensive and is constantly expanding. Some useful publications include:

Postal Stationery of the World (Edited by Edward Fladung).

Grosser Ganzsachen-Katalog (Compiled by Dr. Ascher).

Michel Ganzsachen-Katalog Europa West and Europa Ost

Kessler's Catalog of Aerograms (Volumes 1-3, edited by A.E. Lewandowski

Australasian Stamp Catalogue (produced by Seven Seas Pty Ltd).

Articles on stationery occur in journals published by specialist collectors' groups.

Another means of finding out information about postal stationery is to seek advice from other collectors of postal stationery. There are societies of stationery collectors in many countries including Australia, USA and UK. These societies publish journals with articles on postal stationery and their members are happy to share their knowledge with new collectors.

## ***POSTAL STATIONERY SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA***

The Postal Stationery Society of Australia seeks to encourage the collecting of postal stationery in Australia and to provide a forum for the exchange of information and discussion on postal stationery.

The Society:

- is not based in any particular city or state;
- has a coordinator from each state;
- holds meetings at national and state level exhibitions;
- offers a newsletter (*The Postal Stationery Collector*) four times a year to help keep members in touch;

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**Joining the Society**

To join the Society please write to the Treasurer, PSSA, PO Box 2124, Ascot, QLD 4007; stating your name, address and collecting interests and enclosing the subscription fee. The subscription for 1999 is \$25 (\$30 for New Zealand and \$40 for overseas members including air mail postage). Cheques should be made payable to the Postal Stationery Society of Australia. Payment is also accepted by Visa or Mastercard. Correspondence on all general matters affecting the Society should initially be addressed to the Secretary. Visit our web page at <http://www.canberra.starway.net.au/~philatelic/pss.html>.