

Philatelic Pioneers

Stamp collecting and philately has been evolving ever since the mid 19th century. During this time there have been some key figures who can be said to have fulfilled the definition of pioneer and whose qualities match many of the associated synonyms. This is the first in an occasional series highlighting some of those who have been most influential in this evolution.

Pioneer,definition: a person who begins or helps develop something new and prepares the way for others to follow .

Pioneer,synonyms: developer, innovator, groundbreaker, trailblazer, pathfinder, front runner, founder, founding father, experimenter, instigator, creator.

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If anyone has a particular “pioneer” they would like to write about or if they have any details of significant achievements relating to personalities previously featured but which have not been adequately reported please get in touch.

Thomas Key Tapling and his legacy (Part 2)



(Part 1 in issue 4)

Thomas Key Tapling (30 October 1855 – 11 April 1891) was an English businessman and politician. He played first-class cricket and was also an eminent philatelist who formed one of the greatest stamp collections of his era.

This article describes a few of the famous rarities in the Tapling Collection, one of the collections in the Philatelic Collections of the British Museum.

Mauritius “Post Office” Stamps



Issued on the 21st September 1847.

The first British Empire stamps produced outside Great Britain.

The Mauritius "Post Office" stamps were issued by the British Colony Mauritius in September 1847, in two denominations: an orange-red one penny (1d) and a deep blue two pence (2d). Their name comes from the wording on the stamps reading "Post Office", which was soon changed in the next issue to "Post Paid".

They were engraved by Joseph Osmond Barnard, born in England in 1816, who stowed away on a ship to Mauritius in 1838. The designs were based on the then current issue of Great Britain stamps (first released in 1841), bearing the profile head of Queen Victoria and issued in two denominations in similar colours: one penny red brown and Two pence blue. Although these locally produced stamps have a distinct primitive character, they made Barnard's "name immortal in the postal history of Mauritius.

Five hundred of each value were printed from a single plate bearing both values and issued on September 21, 1847, many of which were used on invitations sent out by the wife of the Governor of Mauritius for a ball she was holding that weekend. The stamps were printed using the intaglio method (recessed printing), and bear the engraver's initials "JB" at the lower right margin of the bust.

The words "Post Office" appear in the left panel, but on the following issue in 1848, these words were replaced by "Post Paid". A legend arose later that the words "Post Office" had been an error.

The "Post Office" versus "Post Paid" myth

In 1928, Georges Brunel published *Les Timbres-Poste de l'Île Maurice* in which he stated that the use of the words "Post Office" on the 1847 issue had been an error. Over the years, the story was embellished. One version was that the man who produced the stamps, Joseph Osmond Barnard, was a half-blind watchmaker and an old man who absent-mindedly forgot what he was supposed to print on the stamps. On his way from his shop to visit the postmaster, a Mr. Brownrigg, he passed a post office with a sign hanging above it. This provided the necessary jog to his memory and he returned to his work and finished engraving the plates for the stamps, substituting "Post Office" for "Post Paid". This story appears to have arisen from a book by Georges Brunel in 1928.

These stories are purely fictional; philatelic scholars have confirmed that the "Post Office" inscription was intentional. Adolphe and d'Unienville wrote that "It is much more likely that Barnard used 'Post Office' because this was, and still is, the legal denomination of the government department concerned". The plates were approved and the stamps issued without any fuss at the time. Joseph Barnard was an Englishman of Jewish descent from Portsmouth who had arrived in Mauritius in 1838 as a stowaway, thrown off a commercial vessel bound for Sydney. He was not a watchmaker, although he may have turned his hand to watch repairs; not half-blind; and certainly not old; he was born in 1816 and was therefore 31 years old when he engraved the stamps in 1847. In addition, several rubber stamps used in Mauritius on letters prior to these stamps also used the words "Post Office", as did the first two stamps issued by the United States in July 1847.

Philatelic discovery



The Post Office pair at the 1985 Jakubek auction

The Mauritius "Post Office" stamps were unknown to the philatelic world until 1864 when Mme. Borchard, the wife of a Bordeaux merchant, found copies of the one penny and two pence stamps in her husband's correspondence. She traded them to another collector. Through a series of sales, the stamps ultimately were acquired by the famous collector Philipp von Ferrary.

Over the years, the stamps sold for increasing and ultimately astronomical prices. Mauritius "Post Office" stamps and covers have been prize items in collections of famous stamp collectors, including Sir Ernest de Silva, Henry J. Duveen, Arthur Hind, William Beilby Avery, Alfred F. Lichtenstein, and Alfred H. Caspary, among other philatelic luminaries. The future King George V paid £1,450 for an unused blue Two Pence "Post Office" at an auction in 1904, which was a world record price at the time. Adjusting by inflation rate it is about £180,000 in 2020.

The next day, reportedly one of his secretaries commented that "some damned fool" had paid a huge amount of money for one postage stamp, to which George replied, "I am that damned fool"



"Bordeaux Cover" with Mauritius 1d Red and 2d Deep Blue "Post Office" auctioned for CHF 5,750,000 in 1993.

The greatest of all Mauritius collections, that of Hiroyuki Kanai, included unused copies of both the One Penny and Two Pence "Post Office" stamps, the "Bordeaux" cover with both the one penny and two pence stamps which has been called "la pièce de résistance de toute la philatélie" or "the greatest item in all philately", and numerous reconstructed sheets of the subsequent issues. Kanai's collection was sold by the auctioneer David Feldman in 1993, the Bordeaux cover going for the equivalent of about \$4 million."

Source: Mauritius "Post Office" stamps - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

The Inverted Head 4 Anas of India



The Inverted Head Four Annas of India is a postage stamp prized by collectors. The 1854 first issues of India included a Four Annas value in red and blue. It was one of the world's first multicolored stamps; the Basel Dove preceded it by nine years. However, an invert error occurred during production, showing the head "upside down".



The Four Annas stamps were lithographed by the Survey Office in Calcutta. Two colors were used, red for the frame and blue for the head. During production, the paper was first imprinted with the red frames, and then the sheets were laid out to dry overnight. The next day, the blue heads were added within the frames. The First Printing, using Head Die I and Frame Die I, both as shown

began on October 13, 1854. There were 12 widely spaced stamps in each sheet. Exactly 206,040 stamps were printed for this Head Die I issue.

Among these First Printing stamps, at least six sheets with the red frames had been inadvertently turned 180 degrees before being placed in the press. So, although the heads appear to be upside down, it was the red frames that were inverted. D.N. Jatia found that at least six sheets must have been fed into the press upside-down, as six of these stamps from Position 4 showed different lithographic stones were used for the head and frame dies.

The surviving examples of this error are low in number. E. A. Smythies states that, at one time, "Details and illustrations of all the known copies [were] given in that interesting publication, *Stamps of Fame*, by L. N. and M. Williams." One additional example has been reported, yielding 28 total known examples. All of these are postally used. Only two (or three) are known cut square; another 25 are cut to shape (that is, in an octagonal shape). One from the collection of the Earl of Crawford was exhibited in the World Philatelic Exhibition in Washington in 2006.



The two cut-to-shape Inverted Head 4 Annas, on the cover in The Tapling Collection Thomas Tapling purchased the item for £32 in 1890 from the Italian stamp dealer Dr. Emilio Diena.

Three cut to shape examples of the Inverted Head Four Annas repose in the Tapling Collection at the British Library, London, including two (positions 3 and 4 on the printed sheet) on cover, indicating that the error was created by an incorrect sheet placement rather than by a careless die transfer. One example, carefully cut to shape, from position five on the sheet, is found in the Royal Collection.

Source: *Inverted Head 4 Annas* - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

The Inverted Swan of Western Australia



The Inverted Swan, a 4-pence blue postage stamp issued in 1855 by Western Australia, was one of the world's first invert errors. Technically, it is the frame that is inverted, not the image of the swan, but it has become commonly known as the Inverted Swan.

In 1854, Western Australia issued its first stamps, featuring the colony's symbol, the black swan, as did all WA stamps until 1902. While the 1d black was engraved in Great Britain by Perkins Bacon, other values, including the 4d blue, were produced by Horace Samson in Perth using lithography, and with different frames around the swan design for each value.

In January 1855, additional 4d stamps were needed. When Alfred Hillman brought the printing stone out of storage, he found that two of the impressions had been damaged, so he had to redo them. One of the replaced frames was tilted; the other was accidentally redone upside-down. The stone's block of 60 was transferred four times to make the printing stone, and 97 sheets were printed before Hillman discovered the mistake and corrected it, resulting in a total of 388 errors being printed.

However, the errors went unrecognised and unreported for several years. Only 15 complete copies, plus a part of a stamp in a strip of three, have survived. No unused copies are known.

One example was discovered in Ireland in the 1860s, acquired by the Duke of Leinster, and bequeathed to Ireland in 1897. It is on display at a museum in Dublin. It was displayed in 1890 at Royal Philatelic Society London's first philatelic exhibition. Other examples are in the Royal Collection, the **Tapling Collection of the British Museum**, and at museums in Sydney, and Perth, in addition to private collections.

Source: *Inverted Swan* - <https://en.wikipedia.org>