

# Collecting Full-face Queens

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During high school I became very interested in collecting the first issue of New Zealand stamps — Full-face Queens 1855-1873. Before that time stamps had never appealed to me. It was not until then that I discovered the huge range of varieties an expert could identify. I now find this issue to be the most interesting specialised area of philately, even though all the designs are the same!

I started collecting all types of Full-face Queens. I only selected stamps in top condition with light postmarks and no faults. Keeping a high standard of quality makes the collection more attractive and is much more impressive than a collection of stamps with faults. Top quality Full-faces are almost never cheap, but they always hold their value and are very saleable if the collection is sold.

Quickly I realised that it would be extremely expensive to compile a collection that was anywhere near complete and still maintain my standard. I could do one of two things; let the condition slide and buy only cheap examples of the scarce varieties, or specialise in one group that is less expensive and keep the quality high.

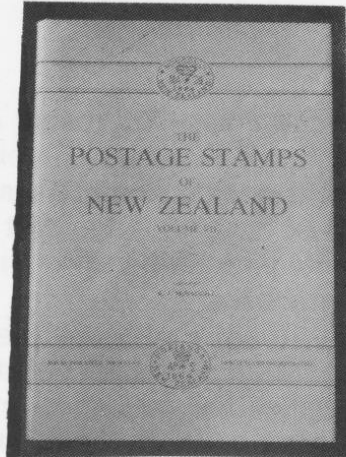
For the reasons already noted I decided to keep a high standard of condition and specialise in the cheaper printings. The natural choice was to collect only the perforated issues, which are generally less expensive than imperfs. However, the perf 13 issues are often high in price so I limited the range to perf 12½ and perf 10. This still allows a tremendous range of interesting shades and varieties to be assembled. Actually it encourages a deeper study of the group, creating a better understanding of the whole subject.

This is probably the most complex stamp issue of New Zealand and for this reason there has been more research done on Full-faces than any other issue. There is no end to the depth of specialisation a collection can contain.

A general collection of Full Faces or Chalon Heads can be broken down into many “mini collections” such as:

- the Richardson printings
- the Davies printings
- Roulettes and serrates
- the Dunedin perf 13
- perf 12½ comb and line
- 2d plate 2, retouches
- shades within each value

Only a very large collection can be broken down like this and still have enough stamps in each group to form a comprehensive specialised collection. Usually it is better to decide on one or two areas in which to concentrate. This means that the collection will not be too general, or be lacking direction.



An excellent source of specialist information is a set of 7 volumes produced by the Royal Philatelic Society entitled "The Postage Stamps of New Zealand". These books give interesting details on many NZ issues. The Full-face Queen information starts in volume 1 and is updated in several later volumes. Unfortunately the books are very expensive to buy, but some libraries have a set available for reference.

A collection of Full-face Queens can never be complete and there are always ways to improve it. So many different varieties exist that I have always been able to find stamps to fit into my collection. Once I had accumulated the most common varieties, I started looking for the more unusual items.

There are several sources of material that should be considered, whatever your collection may consist of. These are outlined in "Sources of stamps".

When you specialise in one particular issue, you should gradually get to know more about that issue than most other people ever do. This specialist knowledge is vital when building a good collection. Sometimes you can obtain a stamp that appears normal to most collectors, but you recognise it as a scarcer variety.

Whenever I see a Full-face Queen I look for several things. Which type of paper is it? Has it a watermark? Which one? Which perforation - perf 13, 12½, 10, or mixed? Is it an unusual shade? Is there anything unusual about the stamp such as double perfs, plate flaws, dry print, etc?

It certainly pays to be observant. The more stamps you examine, the more experience you will gain. This will help you recognise varieties needed for your collection when they come your way.



Just recently I studied an item I purchased some time ago. It was a nice used strip of three of the 1d Brown. I originally bought it because used multiples are hard to get and this was quite a nice looking item. But as I was looking at it I noticed that one stamp had some extra spots of colour that looked like a re-entry. So I opened Volume 1 of 'The Postage Stamps of New Zealand' to the section that illustrated re-entries on the 1d plate. Sure enough, the picture of row 5 number 8 looked just like my stamp. Then I noticed in the book that row 5 numbers 9 and 10 also had re-entries. Since the first stamp of my strip was 5/8, the other two stamps must also be re-entries 5/9 and 5/10. A very nice item indeed!

If I had been more alert when I first saw the strip, I should have noticed the re-entries before I bought it. At the time, the strip appeared rather expensive and I almost didn't buy it because of the price. An opportunity would have been missed.

You will eventually get to the stage where you have enough material of adequate standard to exhibit competitively.

When I started exhibiting I found that I had to change what I collected slightly. When collecting traditional philately it is important to have examples of stamps used on cover. It is best to have covers showing different postage rates, each with the correct stamp(s).

Even though I had enough stamps for a good exhibit, I didn't have any covers. So gradually I began buying covers with different values on them — 1d, 2d, 3d, 6d, etc. Some values are difficult to get on cover by themselves. The 4d Yellow normally comes together with a 6d to make up the 10d rate to England. I have never seen a 4d on cover by itself, but I'm still looking.

There is no such thing as a perfect exhibit. When you have entered one exhibition you will have the judges' comments and criticisms to work on. This gives you ideas on what needs changing to improve the exhibit. You will acquire a few more items to include. Then in the next exhibition you can hope to gain more points and a higher medal.

A gold medal in an international exhibition is a very difficult thing to attain. Most collectors never get to this standard, but it is the dedicated specialist that can make it!