

COLLECTING FOREIGN

the Lee Family

The article is not being written by the entire Lee family, only 3 out of 4 of us collect stamps, the fourth collects cacti and regards stamp collecting as a strange pastime at best!

We each collect at least two foreign countries and have a consequent wealth of experience of both problems and pleasures associated with this part of the hobby.

Our reasons for collecting material other than NZ are many and varied suffice to say that, for the most part, we simply prefer to collect something a little different. In our case 'the different' being Austria, Belgium and Ceylon— Jean, Finland and Switzerland— Wendy, France, Canada and Sweden— Tom. Not that it's that simple of course because we all compete and exhibit and therefore tend to have collections which consist of two main elements. The first and most important is the general collection, an accumulation of anything and everything associated with the countries concerned. Over the years these accumulations have taken on some very strange lines, ranging from a small collection of the Finnish Serpentine Roulettes to a huge collection of French postal stationery. The second elements are the exhibition collections, those parts which have been expanded to a reasonable display size and which tend to swallow up the majority of the money we spend on our collections.

One problem which is constant for all foreign collectors is that of obtaining material in sufficient quantity and adequate quality to enable a worthwhile collection to be built up.

There is no easy solution to this problem it requires patience and a little extra work.

Let's look at all of these countries and we'll give a summary of the what, why and when of each.



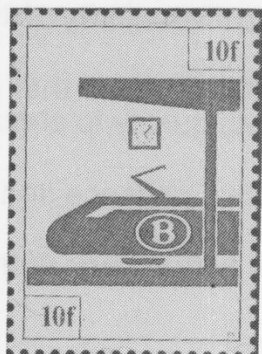
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AUSTRIA.

Jean's major collection and certainly her favourite, the general collection includes everything to date, i.e. 1850-1987, and is essentially a philatelic collection, it concentrates on the stamps. It does however, also include postal stationery and examples of postal usage, (stamps on cover), from all periods.

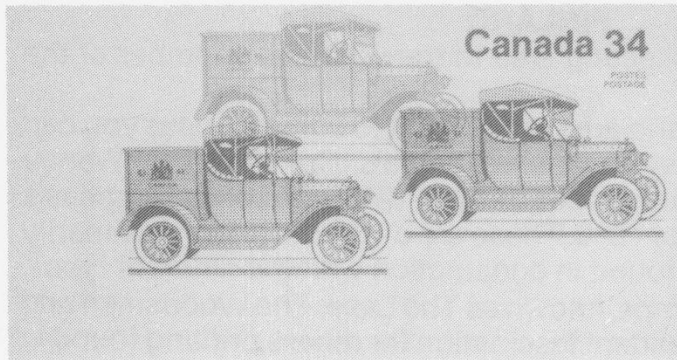
The era used for exhibiting is the early period of 1850-1863 which sounds very expensive but is in fact quite reasonable, until Jean starts looking for examples of multiples, (strips, blocks etc.), then it gets very expensive very quickly. The real fun in collecting this type of country is in building a fairly large collection very quickly and without spending a fortune. From that point on it becomes simple to choose one specific area to concentrate on and build a specialised exhibition collection.

As with all foreign collections Austria can be, and in this case is, split up into numerous smaller collections. The commemoratives are used for club competitions as well as providing a great deal of background information on the country, its culture, history, geography and its postal services. The definitive issues provide the real challenge for the philatelist. There are no less than 14 separate definitive issues from Austria, all worthy of individual study and all of which could be developed into distinct collections. Add to this the Austrian involvement in two World Wars and it should be obvious that this country has unlimited potential for any serious collector.



BELGIUM

Also collected by Jean, but without any specialisation. Belgium is another foreign country with immense potential due to the variety and interest of the issued material. One unusual aspect of this country is the Railways parcel service and its stamps. First issued by the Belgian Railways, these stamps were later used for the Post Office small parcels service. Now these services are combined with the stamps sold by both Railways and the Post office. These make a fascinating and attractive display and are available in sufficient quantities to make them a distinct possibility for any collector.



CANADA

Initially attracted by the issues which were Recess printed Tom has now done a complete about-face and specialises in the postal stationery of Canada.

Any of the definitive issues of Canada can be studied in depth and used for a first class collection. The earlier issues, up to 1903, tend to be expensive even for a representative collection so the young collector would be well advised to start after that date.

The postal stationery of this country is a fascinating study on its own. The postal authorities have issued a variety of attractive and obtainable postal stationery beginning in 1860 and promoted the use of this stationery in a number of ways. It is possible to select one part of the stationery range for collecting, or collect the whole field which includes envelopes, special order envelopes, election envelopes, post bands and wrappers, postage due wrappers and labels, letter sheets, post cards, official pictorial cards, Canada view cards, Railway pictorial cards and money order pictorial cards. As stated, the authorities in Canada have promoted the use of postal stationery and this in turn makes it easier and more interesting to collect.



CEYLON

Now called SRI LANKA. Jean collects only the stamps issued by Ceylon from 1903-1947. These are almost entirely the definitive issues of King Edward VIII, King George V and King George VI. This would best be described as a semi-specialised collection which has the potential to be expanded to any size, split into three or even more sections if required, and which only contains Recess printed stamps. The latter point is that which attracted Jean to these Issues originally.

FINLAND

This is the preferred collecting area of the youngest member of the family, Wendy.

The early issues of Finland are very difficult to collect unless you can afford large sums of money at regular intervals. Consequently Wendy has concentrated on the later issues of 1917-1953 with special emphasis on the pictorial definitives of 1930. These are of special interest primarily because of printing flaws found in conjunction with the different types. These three particular stamps, known as The Lake, The Woodsman and The Castle having the attendant fascination for recess printing found in the Lee household.

Major difficulties are firstly the expense involved in buying the better material, and secondly the common problem for NZ collectors of foreign stamps, that of finding good examples postally used. The first problem eases as she gets older, the second simply gets harder and harder as time goes by.

Once again this is a collecting area which is simple to start with, a large collection can be built fairly quickly and without spending a great deal. Naturally the problems become harder to solve as the level of the collection rises, but then the collector's ability to overcome problems increases with experience.





FRANCE

This is Tom's major collecting interest and, as he has collected longer than the others, this is a very large collection. The general collection includes all aspects of the country, stamps, postal stationery, postal history (which now constitutes the largest section) and cinderellas.

This country is also worthy of a number of individual studies with the definitive issues after 1870 being fairly easy to collect. There is also a large amount of interest in other areas of French philately, the French art stamps issued from the early 1960s are beautiful examples of Recess printing. The Red Cross stamps, first issued in 1915, provide a background history of Red Cross services over the years. The Tourist Publicity issues from the mid-1950's provide a marvellous geography lesson for anyone interested in the country and last, but by no means least, the French P.O. issue all stamps for two International organisations based in their country. UNESCO stamps have been issued since 1961 and stamps for the Council of Europe have been issued since 1958.

The postal history of France and its postal stationery are also well worth individual study with a wealth of material available in both areas. Not that it's easy to build a good collection of course, especially whilst living in NZ. This will still require patience and a lot of work. The point all young collectors must bear in mind here is that a successful and medal winning entry can be put together without having to buy everything abroad. The material required to improve such a collection to adult standards can then be obtained later on, when the experience and finance have been gained.

SWITZERLAND

Wendy's latest collection and definitely not serious at all as yet.

This collection has been started for the potential it offers long term, because Wendy likes the stamps issued and the way they are issued, (in strictly controlled numbers of issues each year). Looked at long term, (what the collection could become over the next 25 years), Switzerland probably has more potential than most countries. The definitive issues are used for long periods and consequently have changes and varieties to make them interesting for study. The special issues each year are also worth extensive study as is the postal history of the country.

SWEDEN.

This is the collection Tom works on for one reason only, recess printed stamps! Sweden is one of the few remaining countries to print almost all their stamps using this printing process. Not that this was the original reason for collecting this country. The stamp issuing policy of Sweden is, and always has been, one which makes the stamps relatively easy to sort into small displays. In other words, they were collected for club and regional competitions and have proved very successful at this level. The definitive issues can be, and are, collected for large exhibition entries, but not by Tom at this stage. They are now collected purely and simply because he likes them!.



It should now be very obvious that the three of us collect basically that which we like, and work hard at making the most of what we have. We also collect very much for the pleasures the hobby offers to those who approach it correctly. We enjoy being successful in competitions and exhibitions, but enjoy the competitions and exhibitions far more than the successes.

If you are tempted to consider collecting a foreign country then the countries listed here are by no means the only ones worthy of consideration. You should look for a country which has all of the following factors;

- 1) A sensible issuing policy (It must not issue large numbers of expensive stamps each year).
- 2) Older issues must be available in reasonable quantity and at reasonable prices.
- 3) It must have two or three definitive issues worthy of study and which obey the above.
- 4) Special issues and/or commemorative issues should lend themselves to small displays.
- 5) It should be a country which is acceptable in philatelic terms. (Not all countries are considered 'good' in philatelic terms. Avoid those countries which issue cancelled-to-order material or which issue high value stamps too often).
- 6) Above all other considerations it must issue stamps which you like and will enjoy collecting at any level, for your own enjoyment, for competition, for displays and talks or for exhibiting.