

Rewards of a Specialized Haiti Collection

Carroll L. Lloyd*

Many persons who are attracted to philately have begun the hobby by collecting stamps on a world-wide basis. This approach is adopted since one is able to gather stamps that are easily available from many fascinating countries. A wider knowledge of history and geography is the inevitable consequence. And the cost of such a one-of-a-kind collection is rather modest at the outset.

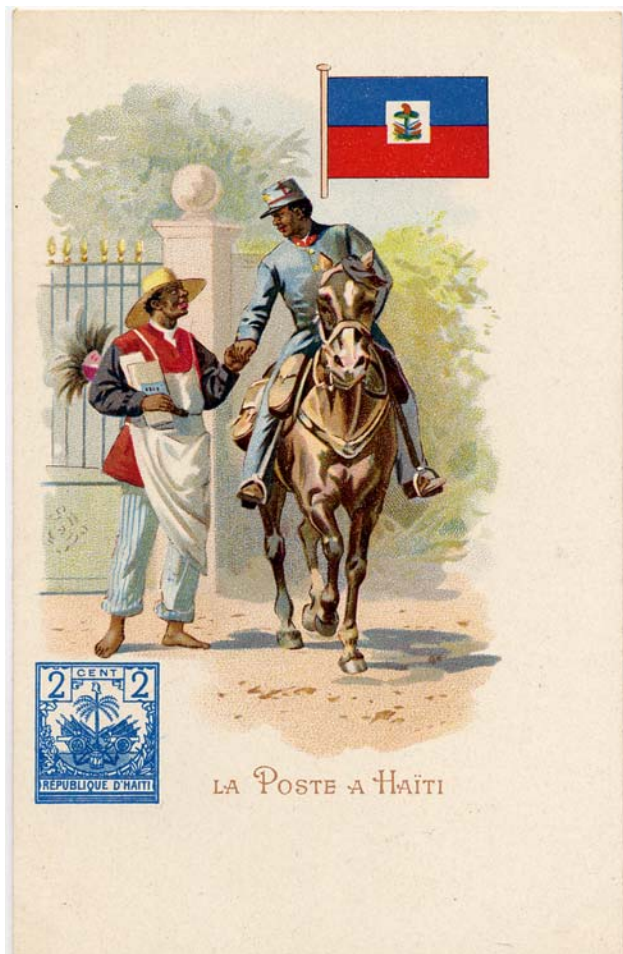
Soon, however, one realizes the hopelessness of completing such a collection. The outpourings of the Iron Curtain and Sand Dune countries soon dim the initial enthusiasm. There is little wonder that the average collector begins to decrease the scope of activity and focus on a limited area. A number of collectors begin to concentrate on a single country in a concerted effort to devote one's resources to the assemblage of a really representative collection.



Haiti is an excellent country upon which to focus one's efforts. Its history is fascinating. Once the most lucrative of all French colonies, it became the second country in the Western hemisphere to gain its independence in 1804. The interaction of this small nation with French, German, British, Dutch, and American interests are reflected in its stamps and postal history. The Liberty Head issues rank as classics comparable to the early emissions of any nation. However, most of the stamps are relatively inexpensive and rather easily obtainable. As a result more and more collectors are beginning to discover the attractiveness of this small country. So, as a basic collection can be amassed with reasonable effort. However, when most of the major catalog numbers have been obtained and one's interest in the country has been whetted, where can one turn for additional pleasure?

The recommended course of action is the formation of a specialized collection. There are many philatelic items of unusual nature that can be purchased for a fraction of the cost of their counterparts from a more popular country. The resulting intellectual rewards can be great.

A specialized collection of a particular issue of stamps includes any items that are related to the issue. The steps in the production of the issue are documented by the inclusion of artist's drawings, essays, progressive proofs, die proofs and trial color proofs representing the sequential stages in plate development. The issued stamps can be collected in multiples showing marginal inscriptions, plate numbers, control numbers and tête-bêche pairs. In the early issues characteristic and constant flaws on each stamp in a pane enable one to assign single stamps to





their proper position in assembling a complete “plating.” Errors of omission and commission are eagerly sought. These include perforation varieties, double prints, missing, or inverted centers, overprint varieties and stamps printed on the wrong side. Especially desirable are covers franked by the particular issue showing various rates and postal markings. When covers are not forthcoming, used stamps showing packetboat markings, small town cancels and foreign transit and receiving marks are eagerly sought. As one can see, an extensive story can be written about a single issue of stamps.

In assembling such a collection one is constantly learning the fundamentals of philately. In studying such characteristics of stamps as watermarks, the entire process of paper manufacture is revealed. The various methods of printing such as typography, lithography, intaglio and photogravure are encountered and assimilated. Procedures and equipment are reviewed for producing different types of stamp separation such as perforation or rouletting. After years of such study some specialists learn much more about a given issue than any catalog or expert committee can divulge.

Of course, the specialist is quite interested in the postal history of the chosen country. This pursuit entails the study of rates, routings and postal markings on stamped or stampless covers which have fulfilled the primary purpose of postal communication. It is quite a challenge to find covers for any issue of Haiti showing internal rates such as circular, single weight, double weight and registered usages especially before 1920. The author has never seen domestic, non-philatelic covers of many of the overprinted issues of the early years of the American occupation. Maritime covers showing German, French and Dutch packetboat markings are eagerly sought. Also prized are covers originating in the British and French post offices established in this small country in the Nineteenth Century. The specialist in Haiti who can identify the postal forgery of the Second Issue will be more than amply rewarded when only he has the

expertise in a given situation to identify it on cover. Only two are known.

Of course, many of these covers bring fancy prices when offered by a dealer or sold at auction to a knowledgeable clientele. But, many unusual and scarce covers can sometimes be found in cover in auctions or in boxes at a bourse. Knowledge and persistence can really pay off.

Finally, the thrill of philatelic research beckons to those who have sufficient interest to study their material. It is gratifying to have sufficient knowledge of the perforation, paper, gum, ink, printing method and state of the plate to be able to discern whether a particular example is an original, reprint, or forgery. The high standards set by such students as L.L. Hausburg and J.R. W. Purves on the Liberty Head issues point the way to collectors of Haiti. And there are a number of other issues on which much needs to be learned.

Why not start a specialized collection? The cost of many items is relatively low especially if acquired in a lot. Experience the thrill of finding a really elusive item that only a specialist would recognize. Mount and exhibit your material for the edification of others. Above all, find the greater depth of satisfaction in really learning about your stamps. Being a philatelist can be much more fun than being just a collector.

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www.haitiphilately.org

or write:

Wally Deltoro, HPS Secretary-Treasurer
5709 Marble Archway
Alexandria, Virginia 22315

