

My All Time Favorite Stamp Issues By Richard Pederson

One of my favorite stamp publications is *Mekeel's and Stamps* weekly magazine. Over the past year, there have been some wonderful articles written by Charles Anderson discussing his favorite modern (post-1960) and pre-1960 commemorative series. Those articles have elicited a great amount of editorial comment in *MeKeel's and Stamps* and they also got me to thinking about my candidates for the respective lists. There have certainly been many interesting, attractive, and historically significant U.S. issues over the years, but those were not always the issues that sparked my interest as a young collector. As a collector who grew up in the fifties and sixties, not only was my imagination piqued by earlier U.S. emissions, but also by those of other stamp issuing entities throughout the world. With that in mind, I decided to take on a much broader task, that of identifying my favorite sets of pre-1960 worldwide stamps (including U.S. issues).



First I had to set my guidelines for selecting candidate issues. Because many of the issues that have captured my interest over the years have been definitives and because there were far fewer commemoratives prior to 1960, I chose to allow both definitives and commemoratives. I defined a set as an issue or design type (for definitives) that consisted of at least four (4) stamps. Also, if a set was reissued in whole or in part, I considered all emissions as part of the same set. For example the U.S. Washington-Franklin issues are one set of stamps by my criteria. In addition, if a country issued multiple sets of stamps with subtle design distinctions between them, such as the early Egyptian issues showing the sphinx and a pyramid in portrait format, I also considered that a single set.

Upon compiling a list of candidate worldwide stamp issues, I found that many contained stamps that are still easily obtainable and not overly expensive. That is probably because the issues I remembered were those in the beginner worldwide albums of the day. They were included in those albums because they were also included in the low cost stamp packets, mixtures, and approvals available at the time. Some of those sets had higher denomination values that were beyond my budget as a beginner, but were also not pictured in my childhood stamp albums. At the time, that was okay with me because I was happy simply filling spots in my albums and, in many cases, was not even aware that there were other stamps I was missing.

Because the sets of stamps I selected are heavily biased by my youthful memories, it may not be representative of the entire world and would probably be different if I had started collecting as an adult. Nevertheless, my final list does include many stamps that captured my imagination as a child, elicit many fond memories, and were instrumental in starting my life long adventure of stamp collecting. My choices certainly reflect the philatelic paths I have traveled up to

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the present day. One-half of my selections are from the U.S. and British Commonwealth, my current primary collecting interests. Most of the remaining choices tend to be from seemingly exotic places that captured my childhood imagination. Following is my list, going from my number ten (10) choice to my number one (1) or favorite choice. For each issue, I say a few words about what makes that issue special for me and provide a few basic facts about the set. Although a number of these sets were reissued in different formats (e.g., imperforate and perforated, watermarked and un-watermarked, different perforations), with different values, or with slight changes in design (e.g., different borders), I have only provided the Scott numbers for the version of the set I collected or to which I was first attracted.

1. Number 10 – Spain Christopher Columbus Tribute (Scott # 418-32). As a youth I read and heard a great deal about Christopher Columbus as part of my grade school world history. The low values in this 1930 set captured my interest because they were oversized stamps that dramatically portrayed the bow and stern views of the Columbus ship, the Santa Maria, in full sail. Three of the middle values in this set are engraved stamps that were in a triangular shape and showed the three ships Columbus took to America, the Pinta, Nina, and Santa Maria. Two other middle values in the set are attractive multicolor engraved stamps showing Columbus leaving Palos and the two top values are single color engraved stamps showing Columbus arriving in America. The lower values in the set are very inexpensive in mint and used condition and the middle and upper values range from inexpensive to moderately priced in either mint or used condition. This set was privately produced and was only available for sale at Spanish post offices for three days. Although the mint and used prices for stamps from this set are comparable, my guess is that assembling a set of genuine used examples postmarked near the time of issue is a challenge. Scott 422, the 5 centesimo value, showing the bow of the Santa Maria, is pictured.
2. Number 9 –Australia Kangaroo and Map (Scott # 1-15). Australia was both far away and possessed strange and wonderful animals, such as the kangaroos, not encountered elsewhere. As a youth, that was a hard combination to top. The first eleven values in the set are printed in a variety of subdued colors with the four high values printed in two colors. Although some of the higher values in this typographed (i.e., letterpressed or surface printed) 1913 set are quite expensive, the ten lower values (Scott 1-10) are still within reach of most collectors. Later sets containing the same design, but varying in watermark and

or perforations, also tend to be in the moderately priced to expensive range. Scott 2, the one pence value, is shown.

3. Number 8 –Chinese Junks (Scott # 202-242). There are actually three different designs in this engraved 1913 set: a junk; a person reaping rice; and the Gateway to the Hall of Classics in Peking. The stamps depicting the junk or person reaping rice are in single colors and the higher values showing the Gateway to the Hall of Classics are two colored with the vignette in black and a colored frame. This set fascinated me because it depicted things from the far east and showed me a part of the world that was both far away and very different in culture from the areas to which I had been exposed. The majority of the set is inexpensive or moderately priced with only the top two values being relatively expensive in both mint and used condition. The first printing of this design (Scott 202-220) was in London, England. There were later printings in 1915 (Scott 221-239) and 1919 (Scott 240-242) in Peking, China. A re-engraved version of the set was printed in Peking in 1923.



4. Number 7 – Egyptian Sphinx and Pyramid (Scott # 29-41). This typographed set issued from 1879 through 1893 is the oldest on my list and shows two things (i.e., the Sphinx and pyramid) that were mysterious and marvelous all at once. It still amazes me how a civilization that long ago could erect such magnificent structures with the tools and technologies they had at hand. It just goes to show what human ingenuity (and a lot of forced labor) can accomplish. All of the values in this set are still moderately priced in used condition. There are a couple of earlier Egyptian sets that picture the Sphinx and a pyramid, but I selected this set because it is affordable and more attractive as the printing and colors are clearer and the pyramid is more visible. Scott 33, the 10 para value, is pictured.




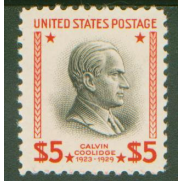

5. Number 6 – French Guiana Archer and Scenes (Scott # 109-151). This typographed set issued between 1929 and 1940 pictured a native (i.e., Carib) archer and scenes of rapids on the Maroni River and a government building in Cayenne. The values picturing the Carib archer, in native garb, drew my attention as a young collector and gave me an idea of what it was like in the untamed tropical areas of South America. Scott 110, the 2 centimes value showing the Carib archer is pictured. This entire issue is still relatively inexpensive and within reach of all collectors.



6. Number 5 – George V Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika Scenes (Scott # 46-59). This 1935 set shows various scenes from the three east African British Commonwealth states. All values are engraved except for the 10¢ and one pound values, which are typographed. Scott 48, the 10¢ value (pictured), in particular, captured my interest with the



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- black outline of a lion and African scenery contrasting with a yellow background. Although the one pound value in the set is relatively expensive, the other values are still within reach of most collectors, with many of the values being very inexpensive.
7. Number 4 – Nyassa Giraffes and Camels (Scott # 26-38). An attractive set of 2-color engraved stamps with the vignette in various colors and the frames in black. Not only is this 1901 set from a continent (Africa) that seemed mysterious to me as a youth, but the animals (giraffes and camels) pictured made the stamps all the more interesting and exciting. This set always had special meaning to me because the stamps were given to me by my great uncle who had introduced me to stamp collecting. The stamps in this attractive set are all relatively inexpensive in either mint or used condition. Scott 33, the 75 reis value, is pictured.
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8. Number 3 – U.S. Presidential Issue (Scott # 803-834). The 1938-1954 Presidential issue was one of the first challenges I took on as a young collector. It was a great, and ultimately successful, adventure trying to complete the set from stamp packets and by trading. This set, which is also commonly called the “Prexies”, pictures all U.S. presidents through Calvin Coolidge plus Benjamin Franklin, Martha Washington, and the White House. All of the stamps, except for the three high values, are single color. The one, two, and five dollar stamps are two colors with the portrait in black surrounded by a colored frame. This engraved set continues to be a great interest of mine as I am currently working on assembling a Prexie exhibit. All of the Prexies are still affordable in used condition and most values are still reasonably priced as mint singles. Scott 834, the \$5 value, is pictured.
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9. Number 2 – the Federated Malay States Tigers (Scott # 38-48). These single color typographed stamps fascinated me because of the tiger shown in action running in the central vignette. Any country that had tigers running wild certainly captured my interest. All values in this 1906-1922 set are affordable in mint or used condition to most collectors, with a number of values being available in used condition for under a dollar. There are also earlier and later versions of this design type, with some values having attractive two color designs. Scott 42, the 3¢ value, is pictured.
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10. Number 1 –U.S. National Parks (Scott # 740-749). The 1934 U.S. National Parks issue has always been my favorite stamp set. It was originally issued to help advertise the national park system to increase use of the parks. In my opinion, these beautifully engraved single color stamps are one of the most attractive sets ever issued by the U.S. or any other country. This set also has the advantage of still being very affordable and available in either mint or used condition, thus allowing newer collectors to also enjoy this wonderful stamp issue. For those

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interested in really exploring the national parks set, there are also imperforate special printings that were sold in uncut press sheets allowing many different varieties (e.g., line pairs, center line blocks) and souvenir sheets that replicated the one cent, three cent, and ten cent values. Following is a picture of the national parks set. Although for the previous sets, I showed a single, representative stamp from the set, I chose to show the entirety of my all time favorite stamp issue.



There are many other worldwide issues that have attracted my interest over the years, but those listed above are the ones that have appealed to me most of my life. What are your favorites? Which issues captured your imagination as a beginning stamp collector? Do your early favorites still hold your interest? Are your favorite stamp issues principally from a single country or area or do they, like mine, cover much of the world?