

## World's Most Valuable Stamps

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The world's five most valuable stamps.



#### Sweden Three Skilling Banco, Yellow Color Error, 1855

The three skilling stamp (yellow color error) was issued in Sweden in 1855. Due to a printing error, this stamp is printed on yellow colored paper (meant for the eight skilling stamp of the same set) instead of the usual green color (used for the three skilling stamp). One copy of the yellow error variety of this stamp was found in 1885 by a young Swedish boy in his grandfather's collection.

It is a one-of-a-kind rarity, as no other copies have been discovered to date. In 1996 the stamp was sold to an anonymous collector for **\$2.3 million** at auction.



#### Post Office Mauritius, 1847

In 1847, the Governor of the Mauritius Island, a British colony located in the Indian Ocean, decided to issue the colony's first postal stamps. A local watchmaker from the capital city of Port Louis was awarded a contract to produce two stamps - a one penny stamp and a two pence stamp. In the course preparing to print the stamps, the watchmaker erroneously engraved the words "Post Office" instead of the correct words "Post Paid" on the stamps. By the time the error was discovered, over 200 copies of the stamps had already been printed and sold.

It is estimated that fewer than 30 individual copies of these stamps have survived and they are valued at between \$600,000 or more depending on the condition of the particular stamp being sold. In 1993 a cover bearing 2 of these stamps sold for a whopping **\$3.8 million**, the highest price ever paid any philatelic item.



#### U.S. Franklin Z-Grill, 1867

This stamp is the rarest of all U.S. stamps, as only 2 copies are known to exist. These stamps depict a portrait of Benjamin Franklin and are embossed with a "Z-Grill" - being a pattern of tiny squares embossed into the paper and visible on the back of the stamps. The purpose of the "Z-Grill" was to permit the canceling ink to be absorbed into the stamp paper thus preventing those who wanted to cheat the post from washing out cancellation marks.

The use of "Z-Grills" was not found to be practical and the practice was soon discontinued. An 1868 1 cent "Z-Grill" stamp sold for **\$930,000** in 1988.



#### Hawaiian Missionaries, 1851

In 1851 Hawaii issued its first stamps. These stamps are now referred to as the "Hawaiian Missionaries" because they were frequently used by American missionaries on the islands to send letters back to the continental United States. The new stamps were printed in Honolulu in three denominations (2 cent, 5 cent, and 13 cent).

Because the first "Hawaiian Missionaries" were crudely engraved and printed on thin and poor quality paper, very few of these stamps have survived and they are extreme rarities.

The lowest denomination, the 1851 two cent, is the rarest of the set, with only about 16 copies known to exist today. A 2 cent Missionary is valued at about **\$760,000** in unused condition and about **\$225,000** used.



### British Guiana One Cent Black on Magenta, 1856

For a very long time, the 1856 one-cent "Black on Magenta" of British Guiana was considered to be the world's rarest and most expensive stamp.

In 1856, the former colony of British Guiana was in urgent need of an additional supply of stamps, and could not wait for a fresh stock of new stamps to arrive from England, where they were normally produced. The postmaster of British Guiana asked the publishers of the Official Gazette newspaper in Georgetown to print an emergency issue of stamps for local use. Rather crude looking stamps were printed in one cent and four cent denominations. The one cent stamps were to be used as postage for newspapers and the four cent stamps were intended for use on letters.

The stamps were printed on poor quality paper in black ink on magenta coloured paper. The stamps depicted a sailing ship together with the name "British Guiana" and an inscription of the colony's Latin motto "Damus Petimus que Vicissim" ("We Give and We Seek in Return"). The stamps had a rectangular shape with the corners snipped off. With the corners clipped off, the stamps actually have more of an octagonal shape. Each stamp was initialed by a post office employee, as a security measure against possible forgeries. Production of these stamps did not last for very long.

In 1873, a 12-year local boy discovered an octagon-shaped one cent "Black on Magenta", postmarked April 4, 1856, and bearing the initials "E.D.W" in his family's attic. He later sold the stamp to N. R. McKinnon, a local stamp collector, for a small sum. Over the years it became apparent that this stamp was unique, as no other copy was ever discovered. In 1980 it was auctioned to John Dupont for **\$935,000**.

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