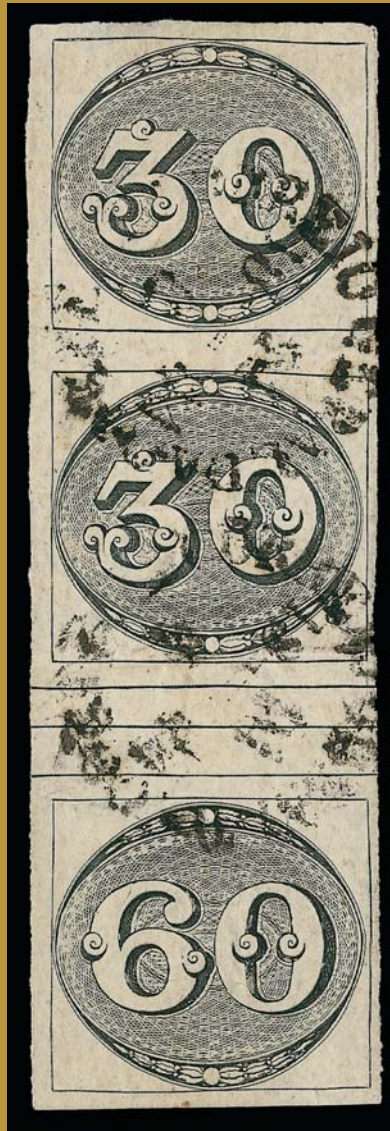


The “Pack Strip”



Lot 17

History of The “Pack Strip”

The 30r and 60r se-tenant strip of three presented here is known to all of philately as the “Pack Strip,” in deference to one of its earliest owners, Charles Lathrop Pack. The Pack Strip is also known to specialists in Latin American stamps as the “Xiphopagus Triplet” (*xiphopagus* is a medical term for symmetrical conjoined twins).

Since its discovery in 1897, the Pack Strip has withstood the test of time, and today it is still ranked as one of the world’s Top Ten most desirable philatelic rarities. It has been featured in award-winning collector exhibits and in the Aristocrats of Philately displays at major international philatelic events. The strip was one of the most highly-valued rarities in the 1954 *Life* magazine feature spread, “The World’s Rarest Stamps.”

It seems appropriate, on this rare occasion when the Pack Strip will be offered to the philatelic market, to examine the Pack Strip’s significance and to trace the path of ownership from its discovery in 1897 up to the present time. To appreciate the importance of the Pack Strip, one should start with a basic understanding of Brazil’s 1843 Bull’s Eye issue and the printing methods used to create the stamps.

PRODUCTION OF THE BULL’S EYE ISSUE

The first stamps of Brazil were authorized by government decree on November 29, 1842, under the reign of Emperor Dom Pedro II, who was then just a teenager. Postage rates were established for land and sea routes: 60 reis for a letter carried by land weighing up to 4 *oitavas* (an old measure of weight, roughly equal to one half-ounce), and double the land rate for mail carried by ship. The land rate increased at 30-reis increments for each additional 2 *oitavas* (quarter-ounce), and the sea rate increased at 60-reis increments. Reduced rates for Court of Law mail and printed matter were also authorized.

Therefore, the three stamp denominations required by the 1842 postal reform were 30, 60 and 90 reis. Government officials ordered production of the stamp plates on February 23, 1843, and, just two months later, on April 29, the first plate was finished and presented along with proof impressions to the President of the Treasury by the Comptroller of the Mint.

The remarkable Bull’s Eye stamps, named for their large oval shape, were designed without the country’s name or a portrait of the Monarch. The Comptroller, in a letter to the President of the Treasury, expressed his rationale for deciding against imitating Great Britain’s use of a royal portrait. He claimed that it was disrespectful to place the Monarch’s portrait on “things, which by their character, invariably become waste,” and he expressed concern that forgery would be easier with stamps bearing a well-known portrait. In place of a portrait, each of the Bull’s Eye stamps presents a large numeral surrounded by spiraling lathework, an anti-counterfeiting measure patented by Perkins, Bacon & Company of England. The engraving was executed in Brazil by the Mint on a machine seized by Brazilian Customs in 1841; however, for many years the designs incorporating the Perkins method had fooled philatelists into thinking the issue had been printed in England.

The stamps’ issue date was officially declared to be August 1, 1843, and surviving off-cover stamps with postmarks of that date are evidence that they were released on time. The only stamps issued earlier by a nation’s post office for use throughout the country were Great Britain’s May 1840 Penny Black and Two-Pence Blue. The 1842 United States City Despatch Post stamps and the 1843 Swiss Cantonal stamps pre-date Brazil’s first issue, but those stamps were neither distributed nor used throughout the entire country, as were Brazil’s.

THE BULL'S EYE PLATES

The nameless and faceless Bull's Eye stamps immediately gained popularity with nineteenth-century philatelists. Some clues about the unusual configuration of the Bull's Eye plates were provided by multiples that reached collectors. The Xiphopagus Pair was first reported in October 1890, when it was owned by Isidro Moscoso of Bahia, and the first report of the Pack Strip (Xiphopagus Triplet) followed in October 1897, while it was in the possession of a collector in Rio de Janeiro named Carl Johan Lindgren. These se-tenant multiples proved that at least one of the Bull's Eye plates comprised more than one denomination. However, an accurate understanding of the number and composition of Bull's Eye plates was not achieved until the 1920's, when Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. F. Napier published his exhaustive study of the Bull's Eyes (*The Stamps of the First Issue of Brazil*). The Napier plate reconstructions were subsequently shown to contain errors, but they still stand as the basis for continuing studies.

Napier demonstrated that the Bull's Eye stamps were printed from several plates in a variety of configurations and states, as follows:

1st Composite Plate (30/60/90r); 54 subjects arranged in three panes of 18 (6 x 3); top pane 30r, middle pane 60r and bottom pane 90r; each pane surrounded by one continuous outer frame; the panes separated by a horizontal gutter and interpanneau dividing line; four different states (A, B, C, D), distinguished from each other by retouching and recutting.

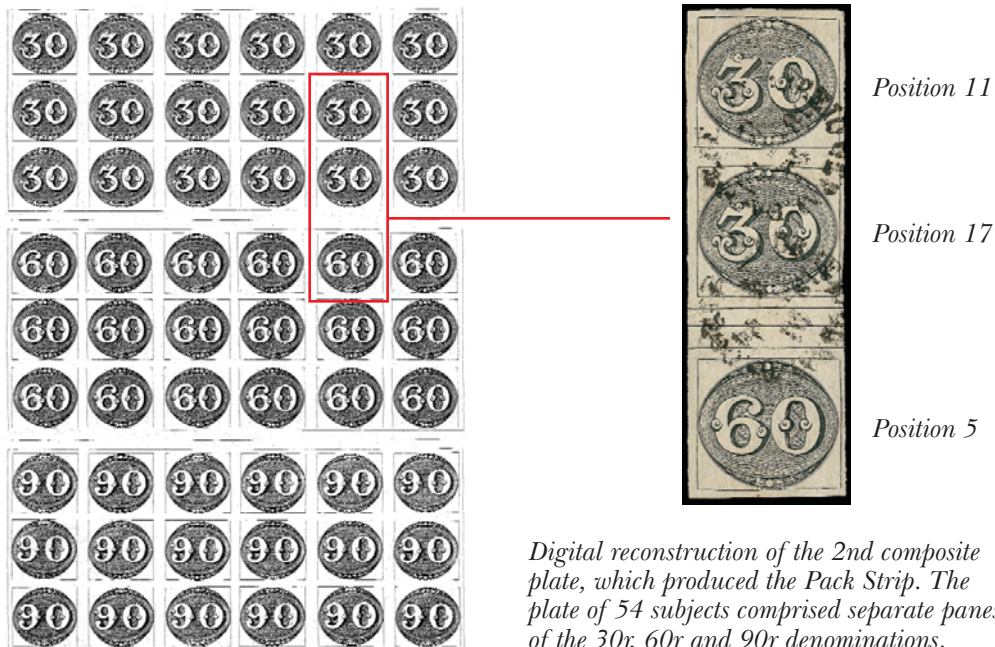
2nd Composite Plate (30/60/90r); as above, also in four states (A, B, C, D).

30r Large Plate; 60 subjects arranged in one pane (6 x 10); the pane surrounded by one continuous outer frame; two different states (A, B), distinguished from each other by retouching.

60r 1st Large Plate; 60 subjects arranged in one pane (6 x 10); the pane surrounded by one continuous outer frame; two different states (A, B), distinguished from each other by retouching.

60r 2nd Large Plate; 60 subjects arranged in one pane (6 x 10); the pane surrounded by one continuous outer frame; two different states (A, B), distinguished from each other by retouching.

30r Small Plate; 54 subjects arranged in three panes of 18 (6 x 3); each pane surrounded by one continuous outer frame; the panes separated by a horizontal gutter; this configuration is confirmed by a rejoined block of four 30r with horizontal gutter.



Digital reconstruction of the 2nd composite plate, which produced the Pack Strip. The plate of 54 subjects comprised separate panes of the 30r, 60r and 90r denominations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PACK STRIP

In the context of the Bull's Eye stamps' issue and production, it is obvious why the Pack Strip rose to such prominence in the field of philatelic artifacts. It represents what is arguably the earliest postage stamp issue in the world after Great Britain's Penny Black and Two-Pence Blue. It combines two different denominations in one multiple from one sheet (this unusual se-tenant plate format would be used in the United States two years later, when the St. Louis and Providence postmasters printed their provisional stamps). Finally, because the sheets were usually divided into panes for sale at Brazil's post offices, se-tenant multiples are exceedingly rare. In fact, only the Pack Strip and the Xiphopagus Pair have survived, and the strip is distinguished by its larger size and far superior condition (as reported, the pair has been "restored" at the upper right).

The ownership history of the Pack Strip was meticulously compiled in an article by Paulo Comelli, a well-respected authority on the stamps and postal history of South America ("The History of the Xiphopagus Triplet (The Pack Strip)", *London Philatelist*, November 2002, 111:331-337). The summary that follows is based on Mr. Comelli's article.

October 1897—Reported for the first time in the *Jornal Philatelico* ("An Unknown Error from Brazil" by Thadeu Rangel Pestana). Described as the property of Carl Johan Lindgren (1846-1916), "a Brazilian of Swedish origin, who lived in Bahia but now is living in Rio de Janeiro."

July-September 1900—The *Philatelista Paulistano* magazine reported "Mr. Felizardo Teixeira de Figueiredo told us he accomplished the sale of an interesting and rare triplet of stamps of 1843. There are two 30rs and one 60rs, printed together on the same sheet and cancelled by the post office. Such a beautiful rarity was sold at the price of 2,000,000 reis." According to Mr. Comelli, this amount was equivalent to US \$300 at the then-current exchange rate, and the buyer was José de Mesquita Martins (1874-1916), the son of the Baron of Itacurussa.

circa 1906-1907—According to Mr. Comelli, the facts indicate that José de Mesquita Martins donated his valuable stamp collection to the friars of Castelo, who in turn sold it for a fraction of its true value. The likely buyer was Theo Lemaire, a prominent French dealer who exhibited the triplet in Paris, France, in 1907 and again at the Buenos Aires Stamp Exhibition held in 1911.



Charles Lathrop Pack

1916—Theo Lemaire sold the triplet to Charles Lathrop Pack, with whom it remained for 28 years. During Pack's ownership, it was widely exhibited and became famous as the "Pack Strip."

December 1944—After Pack's death, his stamp collection was dispersed in a series of auctions held by Harmer, Rooke & Co. On December 8, 1944, the Pack Strip was sold as lot 824 for \$6,250 to the New York stamp dealer, Y. Souren.

May 1954—*Life* magazine presented "The World's Rarest Stamps" (cover story) and featured the Pack Strip with a value of \$15,000.

March 1955—A news article reported the sale of the Pack Strip for \$15,000 by Robert Lyman, a New York dealer. Mr. Lyman later confirmed that he bought the Pack Strip from Souren and sold it to Manolo Galvez, a dealer in Madrid, Spain, who in turn sold it to an Italian collector named Contini.

circa 1956-1958—The Pack Strip was sold to Dr. J. A. Almeida Dias. It was exhibited as part of the Dias collection of Brazil at Sicilia 1959, Barcelona 1960 and London 1960.

March 1963—The Dias collection was offered at auction by Harmer, Rooke & Co., and the Pack Strip was knocked down for £8,250 to William Lea.

February 1969—Stanley Gibbons included the Pack Strip in one of the sales of the Lars Amundsen collection, but it was probably never owned by Amundsen. Robert Lyman bought the strip for £8,700 and sold it to Dr. Norman S. Hubbard.



May 1954 Life magazine cover story featuring the “World’s Rarest Stamps.”
The Pack Strip is pictured at lower right with a value of \$15,000

May 1976—Exhibited in the Aristocrats of Philately display at Interphil 1976.

May 1986—The Pack Strip was sold for \$250,000 plus 10% premium in the Siegel sale of the “Gordon N. John” collection of Brazil. The buyer was an agent for Angelo Lima, whose exhibit of “Brazil Empire 1843-1866” won the International Grand Prix at Philexfrance 1989 and the Grand Prix d’Honneur at Philanippon 1991.

November 1993—The Lima collection was dispersed through private transactions and at an auction held by David Feldman S.A. in Geneva, Switzerland. The Pack Strip was knocked down for 1,000,000 Swiss francs. It was subsequently acquired by Islander.

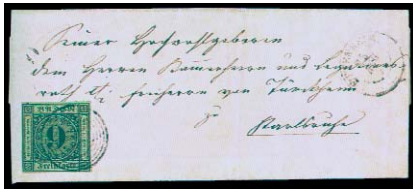
November 1996—Exhibited in the Aristocrats of Philately display at Anphil 1996.

THE WORLD’S TOP TEN PHILATELIC RARITIES

The Pack Strip has always been described as one of the Top Ten philatelic rarities. In an effort to substantiate this claim, we assembled a list of the ten from a survey of various exhibitions and sources. The choices are based on the significance of the stamps, with preference given to major countries’ classics. A country may only be represented once. Large multiples of relatively common stamps and postal history rarities, although of great importance to specialists, have not been considered in this selection.

On the following page, the Top Ten items are listed alphabetically. The last public auction realization or private sale, if known, is reported. Most of this information has been quoted from *Encyclopedia of Rare and Famous Stamps*, by L. N. Williams (published by David Feldman S.A. and used with permission) and the *Bolaffi International* catalogue. Auction prices include the buyer’s premium if applicable to the sale.

THE WORLD'S TOP TEN PHILATELIC RARITIES



Baden, 6kr Error of Color (on cover)
Heinrich Kohler, John R. Boker Jr. collection, 3/16/1985, DM 2,645,000 (US \$1,768,130)
Photo courtesy of David Feldman



Brazil, Pack Strip
David Feldman, Angelo Lima collection, 11/4/1993, CHF 1,150,000 (US \$766,670)



British Guiana, One-Cent Magenta
Siegel Auction Galleries, Rarities of the World sale, 4/5/1980, US \$935,000



France, 1fr Vermilion Tête-Bêche
Spink, "Lafayette" sale, 11/17/2003
€924,000 (US \$1,104,000)
Photo courtesy of David Feldman



Hawaii, 2c and 5c Missionary Cover
Siegel Auction Galleries, Honolulu Advertiser collection, 11/7/1995, US \$2,090,000



Mauritius, 1p & 2p "Post Office" Cover
David Feldman, "Mauritius" sale, 11/3/1993, CHF 6,123,750 (US \$5,000,000)
Photo courtesy of David Feldman



Romania, 27pa Tête-Bêche pair
Unique, ex Ferrary, Hind, last seen in the King Carol collection on exhibition in London 1950

Spain, 2r Blue Error in Pair with 6r
Last sold publicly in 1935, believed to be in the possession of the Galvez family
Photo courtesy of David Feldman



United States, Alexandria "Blue Boy" Provisional (on cover)
David Feldman, private sale, 5/8/1981, US \$1,000,000
Photo courtesy of David Feldman



Sweden, "Treskillling Yellow" Color Error
David Feldman, 11/8/1996, CHF 2,875,000 (US \$2,300,000)
Photo courtesy of David Feldman

THE "PACK STRIP"



17

17° **1843, 30r/30r/60r Black, Se-Tenant Strip of Three (1d).** 2nd Composite Plate, State D, 30r Positions 11/17, 60c Position 5, vertical strip of three from the 30r and 60r panes, the *Xiphopagus Triplet* with interpanneau dividing line between 30r and 60r values, full to large margins, cancelled by two strikes of "Correio Geral da Corte" circular datestamp (1844 yeardate is readable), top stamp has tiny thin, very slight wrinkles or creases

THE CELEBRATED AND UNIQUE "PACK STRIP"—ALSO KNOWN AS THE XIPHOPAGUS TRIPLET—WIDELY ESTEEMED AS ONE OF THE TOP TEN PHILATELIC RARITIES IN THE WORLD.

Ex Lindgren, Martins, Lemaire, Pack, Souren, Contini, Dias and Lima. Exhibited in Interphil 1976 and Anphil 1996 Aristocrats of Philately displays. Illustrated in *Life* magazine's "World's Rarest Stamps" feature story and color spread (July 1954) and in *Encyclopedia of Rare and Famous Stamps*, L. N. Williams..... E. 1,000,000-1,500,000