

# THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE IRISH POSTAGE STAMP: THE TWO PENNY MAP STAMP

£6

12 EIRE

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**D**ecember 6, 1997 was the 75th anniversary of the Irish Free State's first postage stamp: a green definitive (Sc. 68) denominated two pence (2d.) and showing the map of Ireland (Fig. 1). Before that, stamps of Great Britain were used (Fig. 2) from 1840 until February 17, 1922. On that date the current British definitives were overprinted in Gaelic Rialtar



**Fig. 1**

Ireland's first stamp (Sc. 68) designed by James Ingram and issued December 6, 1922, the day of the beginning of the Irish Free State.

Although the Post Office was nominally under the control of the Provisional Government, the use of British stamps was mandatory until February 17. Full responsibility for the Post Office was not transferred until April 1, 1922.

Unoverprinted British stamps remained valid for use in Southern Ireland for the period February 17 to March 31, 1922.

Properly dated covers of this period are sought after by collectors and can range in the several hundreds of dollars particularly if they combine an overprinted stamp with an unoverprinted one. On December 6, 1922, the Provisional Government gave way to the government of the Irish Free State.

The arrival of such a momentous day as was that which saw the emergence of the Irish Free State could not go unnoticed postally. The Provisional Government felt that it was appropriate that stamps be prepared for the new State. It was on February 1, 1922, that the Irish Free Press published a notice of a national competition for the design of a definitive series of postage stamps. However, Ireland was in the midst of a Civil War and stamps were not the first order of



**Fig. 2** One penny red (Sc. 20) used April 18, 1864 in Queenstown (now Cobh), Ireland.

Sealadaí na héireann which stood for Government Provisional of Ireland (Fig. 3). The Provisional Government had come into being January 14, 1922.



**Fig. 3**

IA British George V 2d. deep of orange Type I (Sc.162) overprinted Government Provisional of Ireland.



**Fig. 4** The remainder of the Irish Free State's first definitive series (Sc. 65-67 and 69-76).



business. Delays occurred and it looked highly unlikely that the series would be ready on time. The Government managed to get one of the stamps in its new definitive series out on December 6. This 2d.



**Fig. 5** Booklet pane (Sc. 109a) of six 2d. (Sc. 109) watermarked 'e' upright.

stamp, and the rest of the long definitive series (Fig. 4), was to be in use, with a watermark change, for 46 years until a new Early Irish Art definitive series replaced it in 1968.

Post Office officials concentrated work on the 2d. stamp because that was then the value for the inland letter

rate and the rate to Great Britain. This would be the stamp that would see the greatest usage over its life. It was available in sheet, booklet pane (Fig. 5) and coil (Fig. 6)

formats. In fact, one of its coil versions is Ireland's rarest stamp (Sc. # 68b). By mid-



**Fig. 6** Used coil pair (Sc. 92).

1922, the Dublin press published the following announcement: "From among the thousands of designs for Irish Free State Stamps that have been submitted (Fig. 7), the Provisional Government has selected those shown . . . for further consideration." (Fig. 8)

**Fig. 7** Unaccepted designs for the 2d. stamp.

The designers were **a)** James A. Walker & Co. of Rath mines, Dublin; **b)** S. V. Baker, School of Art, Cork; **c)** R. A. S. Mac Allister, Donnybrook; **d)** Edward Dolan, Drumcondra; **e)** the only design to be submitted by an overseas artist, Noel F. Harrison, Winnipeg, Canada; **f)** Domhnall MacGiobúin, Cork; **g)** & **h)** Sean MacMurchadha, Dublin; **i)** William MacBride, The Craftworks, Dublin; **j)** Millicent Girling, Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin; **k)** Elizabeth A. Whitty, Waterford; **l)** Seán Mac an tSamraigh (John Somers), Dublin; and **m)** the name of the artist who submitted this design is unrecorded.



Above: 7a

7b



Above: 7g

7h

7i



Fig. 8

Designs selected by the Provisional Government for consideration for the first Irish definitive stamps



Today most scholars of early Irish stamps agree that the 2d. stamp is a definitive. This was not always the case even as late as 1975. In the American Philatelic Society's magazine, *The American*

*Philatelist*<sup>1</sup>, two eminent students of Irish philately, Malcolm O'Reilly and Perry Adams differed on their interpretation of the stamp's original status and production. Adams's contention was that the stamp, although printed in Dublin, was prepared entirely by the British. His view is that the dies and plates were rushed through The Royal Mint, the stamp paper originated in Kent and was gummed in London before being sent to Dublin. He also insists that the British crew was unable to correctly set the perforating machine in Dublin and that the stamps were sent to London, perforated and returned just in time for the issue date.

O'Reilly's view was that the 2d. stamp was a commemorative. Its first printing being done in London at Somerset House, the British government's printing works. He views the first printing as a commemorative because the Irish Government issued it as a single stamp on the day of the proclamation of the Irish Free State. He further believed that the "re-



Fig. 9

Same stamp as in Fig. 3 (Sc. 162) now overprinted Free State Ireland.

issue, or Dublin Castle printing" mentioned by Adams, "took place in late December of 1922.". Whatever the right answer is, the original supply of the 2d. was quickly exhausted. British stamps continued to be overprinted. Now the overprint read Saorstát Éireann - Free State Ireland (Fig. 9). These were issued on December 11,

1..O'Reilly, M. G., Perry Adams and J. J. Walsh, *Ireland's First Postage Stamp of its Own in Chemi*, James M., ed. *The American Philatelist*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (Whole No. 891), April 1975, p. 320.





1922. Overprinted stamps were to continue well into the fourth decade of the Century. In fact, the Seahorse George V high values (2/6, 5 and 10 shillings) continued to be overprinted until 1937 (Fig.10).



**Fig. 10**  
SGreat Britain 5/  
(Sc. 180) issued in  
1919 and over-  
printed in 1925  
for use in Ireland.

O'Reilly goes on to say that the December 6 stamps printed at Somerset House used paper made in Ireland and are "a beautiful deep sea green." They give the appearance of being "on chalky or coated paper." He states that the reissued stamps are a "deep-blue green and have a strong bluish tint when held to the sunlight." The telltale sign apparently is that, when soaked, the reissued stamps lose "the green appearance and tend toward blue." Later printings of the 2d. are more stable. The Dublin Castle printers stabilized the inks and while shades and paper difference should be expected in such a long running issue the color no longer runs. A genuine First Day Cover for this issue must be of the "deep sea green" color.

James Ingram of Glasnevin, a suburb of Dublin, prepared the design for the stamp. His design was also used for the one penny (Sc. 66 and 107) and one and a half penny (Sc. 67 and 108). They appeared for sale on the February 23 and February 2, 1923 respectively. They, and the 2d., were printed in sheets of 240 stamps consisting of two panes each containing 120 stamps 12 wide by 10 high. Inter-pane gutter pairs are known and command at least 20 times the price of a single. Stamps overprinted 'SPECIMEN' were mainly distributed to other countries through the Universal Postal Union. Until 1937, paper watermarked 'se' with the letters intertwined and set diagonally in the paper was used. With the proclama-

tion of a new Irish Constitution that year new stamp printings started to use a paper watermark with a series of diagonal 'e's (Sc. 109). An inverted and reversed watermarked is found on the 'se' watermarked paper while on the 'e' paper it is only found reversed. A variety of the stamp, on the 'se' paper, is called 'Storm of Lough Swilly' which are in fact some short transfers north of the island and below the letters I and R of Eire.

From about 1924, the 2d. was issued in coil rolls both vertical and horizontal. The vertical coils were made up in strips of ten stamps with a paper join between each strip while the horizontal coils had strips of 12 stamps with a paper join. The stamps were perforated on all four sides. Two 2d. experimental coils were also produced. The first, in November 1934, was issued with the two horizontal sides imperforate while the others were perf. 14 and on paper watermarked sideways (Sc. 92). These were soon withdrawn. A perf. 15 with the vertical sides imperforate was issued in 1935 (Sc. 68b). It is Ireland's rarest stamp (Fig. 11). A September 1995 monograph, *The Rare Coil*, by Joseph E.



**Fig. 11**  
Ireland's rarest  
stamp. The imper-  
forate by perf. 15  
coil (Sc. 68b).

Foley shows that a strip of four, two pairs and 12 singles are known unused. Foley's monograph does not report the total number of used copies that exist although it is known that more than twenty-five have been recorded including some used strips. Finally only one copy on cover has ever been authenticated.

All booklet panes of the 2d. contain six stamps and can be found on both the

2..Foley, Joseph E., *Compiler, The Rare Coil*, Riva, Maryland, Privately published by Joseph E. Foley, September 1995. 76pp.



'se' and 'e' watermarks. Special sheets of 264 stamps were used to prepare the booklets. They had half the booklet panes inverted resulting in half the panes having inverted watermarks. Therefore booklets, when assembled, could contain either type of watermarked pane or a mix of both. The panes are perforated all around but in the cutting of the booklets the perforations were usually clipped. The 'se' panes were produced between August 21, 1931 and 1940 and stitched into booklets with a face value of 2 shillings. Two numbers showing the year of issue and the serial number are found on booklet covers until 1964 when the use of serial numbers ceased. Later booklets (1950s and 60s) put the serial number first. Two penny 'se' watermarked panes are found in booklets having serial numbers 1 to 22 while the 'e' watermarked panes are in booklets with serial numbers 23 to 30. There was a change in the face value of the booklet in 1948 (serials 31-36) and 1966 (no serial number) to 2/6. Three shilling booklets (serials 43-44) were issued in 1962-63. Most booklets of the period had advertising and postal information interleaves and, sometimes, advertising on the covers as well.



Fig. 13

Fifty pence stamp (Sc. 804) showing Ireland's first stamp and issued to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the world's first adhesive postage stamps.

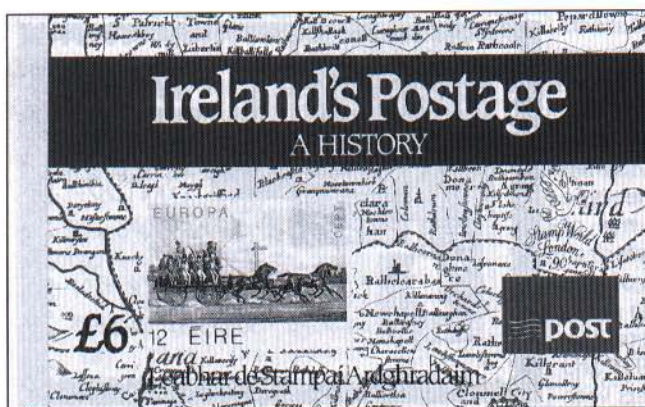
Ireland used reproductions of the stamp, mainly for stamp on stamp designs. In 1972, for the stamp's 50th anniversary a single stamp and a souvenir sheet (Fig. 12)-Ireland's first-were issued (Sc. 326 and 326a). Again, in 1990, for the 150th anniversary of the world's first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black, Ireland's 1922 2d. stamp reappeared. It was part of a montage on different Irish definitives found on the 50 pence (p.). value (Fig. 13). It was printed both in sheet format and in a Prestige booklet (Fig. 14) (Sc. 804, 804a & 804b).

This year it is again featured in a montage. It is silhouetted, on a 32p. stamp, against a photograph of the General Post Office. This new representation of Ireland's first stamp was issued August 27, 1997 as part of the four stamps 'Post Office Service to the Nation' phase of a three-phase commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the State. Twelve stamps were issued in



Fig. 12 Souvenir sheet issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Ireland's first stamp (Sc. 326a)





twelve stamps were reissued together in a limited edition State Anniversary Souvenir Sheetlet available only between December 6 and December 31, 1997 (Fig. 15).

If you are interested in the stamps of Ireland please contact the Philatelic Bureau, AN POST, General Post Office, Dublin 1, Ireland. Collectors of Ireland might wish to join the Eire Philatelic Association by

all celebrating, besides the Post Office, Democracy and State Institutions, Sport, Culture, Commerce and the Arts. The

contacting the Secretary, Michael J. Conway, 19 Pine Needle Drive, Shelton, CT 06484, USA. □

**Fig. 14 above**  
Prestige booklet on the History of Ireland's Postage which contains panes (Sc 804a & b) of the 50p. (Sc. 804) showing Ireland's first stamp (Sc. 68) with other definitives.

**Fig. 15**  
Limited edition souvenir sheet celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Irish State. The 2d. map stamp is shown on the left stamp of the fifth row.

