

The New Zealand International Exhibition of Arts and Industries, Christchurch

The Christchurch Exhibition of 1906/07 was, suggests Don Scregg, the catalyst for the event which took place in 1907, when, from a colony within the British Empire, the Dominion of New Zealand was created—a nation in its own right



The exhibition main building

Philatelically it was the occasion of the first issue of commemorative stamps designed, engraved and printed in New Zealand. A set of considerable significance.

The Founder

The prime credit for the inception of the Exhibition belongs to Richard John Seddon, the Liberal Premier of New Zealand from May 1893 until his untimely death whilst returning from Australia in June 1906. Born at Eccleston, St Helens, Lancashire, on 22 June 1845, Seddon was the son of the Headmaster of the local school. His father belonged to an old Lancashire family, his mother, nee Lindsay, also a teacher, being from Dumfriesshire. After spending some five years as an engineering apprentice the future Premier of New Zealand took ship to Melbourne, Australia, making straight for the gold diggings, but had little success. After securing employment as an engineer under the Victorian Government, he was attracted by the gold discoveries on the west coast of New Zealand. On arrival in 1866, he started sluicing in the Waimea diggings in

Westland. Three years later, when only 24, he started his public life and was elected to represent Ararua in the Provincial Government until the abolition of provinces in 1876.

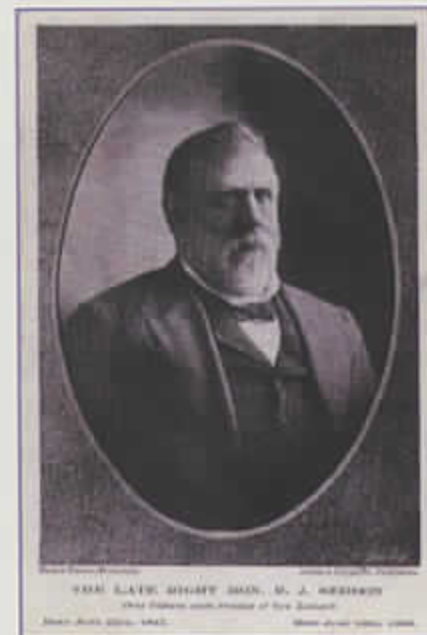
Defeated in the contest for a seat in the first General Assembly as member for Hokitika, it was not until three years later, in 1879, that he was elected, and from that date sat continuously in Parliament. Shortly after his accession to the office of Premier, the Woman's Suffrage Bill was passed. The country's economic recovery from the depression of the early 90s preceded a period of progressive legislation. If one can read in international exhibitions a conscious effort to define national identity, then this hypothesis is easily sustained in the case of the Christchurch Exhibition. For a number of years Seddon had shown enthusiasm for such an exhibition. First

mention was made in a speech by the Governor, Lord Ranfurly, while opening Parliament in Wellington in 1903. This was quickly followed by Seddon, expanding the proposal and suggesting Hagley Park in Christchurch; this met with a cool reception in Parliament. A more aggressive promotion in 1904 persuaded Parliament that this was a way of proclaiming New Zealand's distinctiveness and imminent greatness.

The building

Many problems had to be overcome, not the least of which was the cost of construction of a building which was required for only a few months. Some 40 different committees had been set up and many unforeseen difficulties were encountered. During construction the partly-built main building and one of the towers were extensively damaged by a whirlwind, this being followed by heavy gales which caused more damage. On Monday the 18 December 1905 the foundation stone was finally laid by Premier Seddon, some six weeks later than planned. Problems were solved and difficulties overcome. The official opening

Postcard picturing R J Seddon



During construction the partly-built main building and one of the towers were extensively damaged by a whirlwind



Five publicity labels were produced to promote the exhibition and were in use from early September 1905. A sixth label was used in conjunction with the sale of tickets for an Art Union Draw, the labels being attached to the tickets. A seventh label, depicting Richard Seddon, was produced after the exhibition had opened.



was held with great pomp and ceremony at 11.30 a.m. on Thursday 1 November 1906.

The Exhibition was housed in the largest building that had ever been erected in New Zealand, some 14 acres in extent. Commenced in December 1905, it was completed in September 1906. Two million feet of timber was used for its framework alone. It rested on 25,000 8 inch square piles. 225 tons of galvanised iron was used on the roof of the main building with the skylight area covering 100,000 square feet. 50 tons of nails, and 70 tons of paint was used. 17,000 square feet of ruberoid covered the main dome which was flanked by two high towers between which was the main Exhibition entrance. The strikingly white and bright appearance of the building was due to the use of precast 'stucco' panels.

The labels

For an Exhibition to be a truly international one, it was necessary to attract exhibitors as well as visitors from overseas countries. Advertisements were placed in the national and international press. British and Empire manufacturers were canvassed to exhibit their wares at the Exhibition. Advertising material, catalogues, invitations and other items were printed and distributed. Publicity labels were produced and used by business firms on both local and overseas mail. Five labels were printed and used in this way from as early as September 1905. A sixth label was used in conjunction with the Art Union tickets issued. A seventh label was printed and distributed after the opening of the Exhibition, this to honour the late Richard Seddon.

The original suggestion for the labels came from Mr T de Schreyour of Auckland and was taken up with much enthusiasm. The majority were produced by the Press Company of Christchurch in their Lithographic Department. It was reported that some three million stickers had been

issued, the most popular by far being number 7. Label numbers 1 and 6 are the most difficult to find and full sheets of these are not known. The labels were printed on unwatermarked paper and contain numerous constant flaws, which make them good subjects for the plating specialist.

Numerous Art Treasures were imported for exhibiting, these consisted mainly of paintings and sculptures. A large number were purchased during the Exhibition. The Fine Arts Committee decided to run an Art Union Draw and various items were allocated for this purpose. The tickets for the draw were 2s.6d. each, which at that time could not be described as inexpensive. To help the sale it was decided to add the number 6 label. A special place on the left side of the ticket was reserved for the label, which was stuck on by one of its corners. The normal state of this label therefore is for one corner to have gum damage or to be thinned or torn. The final sale results were very disappointing with only just over 5000 being sold.

The stamps

It was as early as 1904 that Premier Seddon suggested that a commemorative stamp be issued for the Exhibition. On 12 February 1906 a sub-committee was set up to liaise with the Post and Telegraph Department and to arrange for suitable designs to be submitted. The organisers considered that the issue of these stamps would serve to advertise and to commemorate the Exhibition and at the same time improve its revenue, with one third of the proceeds from the sale of the stamps going to the Exhibition.

Some years previously Mr L J Steel, an Auckland artist, had submitted a number of designs of an historical nature to the Post and Telegraph Department, these had not been used at the time. His permission was obtained for the use of these designs and four were selected by the Exhibition Committee. The arrival of *Te Arawa* canoe for the 3d.; Maori art for the 1d.; the landing of Captain Cook for the 3d.; and the annexation of New Zealand for the 6d. It was proposed that all four

The four issued stamps were based on designs by L J Steel





Discarded essays for the 3d. and 6d. designs

Proof of the 1d. in claret (top) 240,000 stamps were printed in this shade (centre) but were rejected as being too dark. The stamp was finally issued in vermillion (bottom)



The circumstances would indicate that the 1d. claret was never issued in 1906 but leaked on to the market

values should appear in one colour; this was later changed with the 3d. and 6d. values being printed in two colours.

Dies were engraved in relief by W. R. Bock of Wellington and a proof of the Maori art type was forwarded to the artist for his comments. He objected to the proposed method of the production of electrotypes and suggested the use of photolithography. The essays clearly showed the unsuitability of his suggestion and after some time it was finally decided to adhere to the original proposals. Electrotypes were made at the Government Printing Office and the stamps were surface-printed, the impressions arranged in two panes of 30 stamps. The selected colours were for the ½d., green; the 1d., claret, this being later changed to vermillion; the 3d., frame in blue and the centre in brown; the 6d., frame in olive-green and the centre in pink.

The stamps were uniform in colour, although there are two shades of the ½d., emerald-green and bright green. The ink used for the ½d. was susceptible to the effects of light and copies in pale green are seen, but these have faded. One of the stereos for the 3d. value suffered damage and on R4/2 of the majority of sheets a large white flaw appears across the figures of the two Maoris behind the chief greeting Captain Cook. There are no other constant plate flaws which appear in this issue. The total number issued and delivered to the custodian of stamps were 117,900 of the ½d., 234,720 of the 1d., 58,260 of the 3d. and 81,000 of the 6d. Not all of the 6d. stamps were sold—borne out by the fact that the 6d. is much scarcer than the 3d.

The Postal Authority came under much criticism for this very limited issue, which was only to be sold at the Exhibition post office. The stamps were, however, valid for use at any other office throughout New Zealand. To prevent speculation, sales were limited to five shillings worth per person. When supplies were exhausted, no further stamps were to be printed. The ½d. value was sold out on 26 January 1907 and the 1d. on 6 February. It was only on 13 February that the five shilling restriction

was lifted. There was certainly some valid basis for the criticism levied at the Government, for even in those days less than 60,000 complete sets seems a very small number indeed.

The selected colour for the 1d. value was claret and 240,000 stamps were printed. One of the sheets of 60 was sent to the Exhibition Committee for their approval, but the shade was regarded as too dark and was rejected. A further printing in vermillion was ordered. The bulk of the stamps of the original printing were destroyed. An examination of any stamp catalogue will reveal an entry for a 1d. claret, this being regarded as one of the rarest stamps issued by New Zealand during the twentieth century. According to the first volume of the Royal Philatelic Society of New Zealand handbooks:

The sheet in claret, forwarded to the Exhibition Committee, was placed with the stock printed in vermillion and was issued to the post office at the Exhibition. The rarity of error was not realised and speculators evidently missed an opportunity.

A visitor to the Exhibition purchased six copies of the error, which he used daily on letters to his wife in Wellington, and it was only when he went to the Post Office to purchase more 1d's that he realised that they were a different colour. Three of the envelopes that he posted are still in existence.

A clerk at the post office subsequently stated that she clearly remembered the

The only plate flaw in the set appears on the 3d. value





Colour trials of the 6d. value. Experiments with these resulted in the 6d. value being placed on sale on 16 November 1906, 15 days after the other three values



Examples of the first datestamp are rare

error, which was on the top of the bundle of sheets that she received for sale on the first day and because of the provision limiting the amount of stamps that could be purchased by any one person, she did not sell more than six of the deep coloured pennies at one time.

The handbook containing the above statement was printed in 1938. The improbability of this account has been clearly propounded in recent times by Robin Gwynn in his book *Collecting New Zealand Stamps* and by Alan S Craig in an article which appeared in *The New Zealand Stamp Collector*. Three covers exist, all on official Exhibition envelopes, all addressed to The Exhibition Secretary, E. J. Righton, in his own handwriting, all posted on 20 April 1907, the last day the post office was open and a week after the Exhibition closed to the public. Three 1d. claret stamps were on each envelope, but two were removed from one of the covers and subsequently sold on piece at auction. The circumstances would indicate that the 1d. claret was never issued in 1906 but leaked on to the market. It can, however, be proved that copies have been released by the Post Office in recent years, from their stock of 14 sheets held in their archives.

The 1/2d., 1d. and 3d. values were placed on sale at the Exhibition post office on 1 November 1906, the opening day of the Exhibition. Because of the time that had been lost in experiments with colour trials, stocks of the 6d. were not dispatched from Wellington until 15 November, these were on sale at the post office three days later.

The datestamps

The post office was opened on Monday 22 October for the convenience of the Exhibition staff and exhibitors. This office was given its own circular datestamp with the word 'Christchurch' in the top semi circle and the word 'Exhibition' at the bottom. Because of damage this was replaced on 1 November by another which was identical except that 'Christchurch' and 'Exhibition' had changed places. Examples of the first

datestamp are rare. The second datestamp continued to be used until the closure of the post office on 20 April, five days after the official closing ceremony had taken place. The second cancellor showed some damage during the course of usage with the first 'C' of 'Christchurch' almost disappearing.

The postcards and cachets

Prior to and during the Exhibition a vast number of picture postcards were produced to cater for the visitors. The cards, both black and white and coloured, were printed by many different firms, most being in series showing views of the Exhibition buildings, the grounds and the attractions available for the public. Cards posted through the post office amounted to 340,000, to recipients both in New Zealand and overseas. There appear to be more cards in mint condition than those used and the total is further increased by many being posted at other post offices, both during and after the Exhibition.

The main building had two 160 foot high towers, the southern one with an electric lift installed. A charge of 6d. for adults and 2d. for children, which appears to be a very expensive ride for those days, did not deter the public. Two hand-stamped cachets were placed on certain cards. The more common is circular, inscribed 'Posted at top of tower', the second being a straight-line 'This card was posted at the top of the N.Z.I.E. Tower.' Many cards, both mint and used, are seen with the first cachet applied.

The exhibitors

Of the exhibitors, 937 were from New Zealand, with 384 from the United Kingdom, the colonies and other countries. The various sites, known as Courts, were in some cases very large and substantial, with Canada and Australia playing a prominent role. In addition to the New Zealand Provincial Courts there were many corporate and private displays. A vast range of goods and products were exhibited, many

The rare first datestamp





Exhibition Tower Lift. Waiting their Turn to Ascend.

New Zealand International Exhibition.



[W&A, Photo] No. 2—The Main Entrance.

receiving awards from the exhibition judges. The Exhibition was considered a resounding success. There were 938,621 paying visitors with 8123 season ticket holders. The amazing thing is that the New Zealand population at that time was 975,000, of whom only 68,000 lived in Christchurch.

The end result

Souvenirs such as glassware, porcelain, medals, medallions, photos and labels all remain to a limited extent. Perhaps the four commemorative stamps are the main reminder of an event which took place almost 100 years ago. As to the magnificent structure shown in many of the exhibition postcards, it is with some disbelief that one learns that the authorities of that time authorised the demolition of the building and all the structures on the site. By September 1907 nothing remained of the buildings. There was an artificial lake created in the grounds called Exhibition Lake, this still remains but has been renamed Victoria Lake. There is no monument left for posterity on the site in Hagley Park. Even the foundation stone, laid by Richard John Seddon has disappeared without trace.

References

- The Postage Stamps of New Zealand, Volume 1*
 Alexander de Kort, *The Great Exhibition*
 Robin Gwynn, *Collecting New Zealand Stamps*
 J Cowan, *The Official Record of the New Zealand International Exhibition 1906-7*
The International Exhibition Christchurch 1906-7, Souvenir Art Publishing Co
 Alan S Craig, Article in *The New Zealand Stamp Collector*

Top left: Postcard bearing the circular 'Posted at top of tower' cachet
 Left: The straight line cachet on a postcard showing the main entrance to the exhibition
 Below: The first datestamp after alteration was used until 1910



Letters

Something philatelic to say?—Why not write to us?—We'd like to hear from you. Send your letters to: Gibbons Stamp Monthly, 5 Parkside, Ringwood, Hants, BH24 3SH.

Swiss Landscapes

I greatly enjoyed reading James Mackay's excellent article on the Swiss Landscapes Stamps of 1934-48, and I congratulate you also on the superb presentation and colour illustrations.

However, I would like to take issue with the author for perpetuating an old 'chestnut', and to correct a very small mistake in the otherwise enlightening article.

First the small mistake. The 1948 increase in postal rates was not in the domestic rates. The inland letter rate remained at 20c. right up to the 1960s. It was the foreign rates that changed and so required a change in colours to keep in with the UPU scheme: Foreign printed matter (green) rose from 5c. to 10c.; Foreign postcards (red) rose from 20c. to 25c.; Foreign letters (blue) rose from 30c. to 40c.

What made me wince much more was the repetition from the Stanley Gibbons Catalogue of the existence of three types in the 20c. Gotthard Railway stamp. To his credit, the author explains in the text that what SG calls 'Type II' is merely a more heavily worn state of Type I. Type I is rather weakly engraved and I have yet to see a crisply printed copy that shows all the details.



Type I Kerb-stone not touching gantry, shading line slopes down at right



Type II (SG Type III) Kerb-stone touches gantry, shading line slopes up

The re-engraved type of this stamp has the design generally strengthened which results in a couple of minute differences. The hardest to spot is the very slight change in the lines of the stonework around the tunnel, a. because the mass of similar lines confuse the eye, and b. because these lines are usually hard to follow on Type I stamps due to plate-wear. There are, however, two other indicators which normally are clearly visible: the kerb-stone which is (due to perspective) nearest the gantry cross-bar, and the near-horizontal shading line on the inside of the road bend at right.

Thanks again for bringing to life an interesting, if 'common', series of Swiss stamps.

Werner Gattiker,
 Leo Baresch Ltd