

RADIO STAMPS — On the Cover

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Stamps are those little, stickum-backed, colored, and often colorful, perforated squares and rectangles of paper that entitle us to send letters when appropriately applied, for which we prepay in return for the stamps. Some people collect stamps with the fanaticism of radio collectors. (I know that is hard to believe but it is true). Some stamps, say, with upside-down airplanes on them, cost as much as catalins. Other stamps, little purple ones from long ago and far away, cost more than Marconi gear. De gustibus non est disputandum, as Petronius Arbiter used to say: There is no accounting for tastes. If you like to collect stamps, you know all of this already. What you may not know is that there are radio-related stamps of all kinds, readily available. One nice thing about collecting radio stamps is that they take up a lot less room than radios. An even nicer thing is that they tell us about some little-known radio history.

The earliest radio stamps were issued by the wireless telegraphy companies. On the cover appear these "franks" of the Marconi company, the United Wireless Company, and the United Fruit Company wireless telegraphy division. These franks entitled the bearer to send a wireless message. They were often made available as complimentary perquisites to good customers, sought after customers, and company officials. The Marconi stamps issued to stockholders in 1913 for complimentary messages. They were printed on sheets, and issued in booklets of several pages of four stamps each. Most were perforated. The landline telegraph companies had long issued such franks, and the wireless companies merely followed suit. The Marconi frank is a near copy of the Western Union frank of the period. (Recently, Italy honored Marconi with an appearance on its 2000 Lira bill. Few other depictions on monetary instruments relate to radio. The collection of money is a whole

nother subject; so, too, is the collection of stock certificates, many of which issued from radio companies).

The United Fruit Company had one of the earliest wireless networks to coordinate its Latin American operations, put together around 1908. It put its surplus capacity to work transmitting radio-grams, as a competitor to Marconi for maritime work, and perhaps also the cables. It supplied wireless telegraph franks as early as 1910, through 1913, to plantation owners to alert ships for crop pick-up and other purposes. It should be remembered that in those early days, competing wireless companies would not carry each others' traffic. As late as 1926 a Tropical Radio Telegraph Company (whose motto was "The Voice of the Americas") at least essayed radio-telegraph franks.

The United Wireless franks tell a story in themselves. The earliest, from 1908 on, are signed by its General Manager, C.C. Galbraith or its President C.C. Wilson. In 1912, the last year of issue, the signature is foregone

Radio Stamps Make Rare Collection

Postal authorities throughout the world have marked the rise of radio in rare stamp issues

STAMP collecting has come a long way from the old-fashioned system of assembling stamps according to country and issue. "Topical collecting," a new trend in this ancient hobby, picks out stamps on a

specific theme, such as flowers, horses, medicine, or what have you.

Herbert Rosen, whose business is radio and whose hobby is stamps, combines the two in a unique collection of stamps picturing nearly every aspect of electronic communications. Starting with the scientists whose discoveries cleared the way for modern electronics, his collection takes us right through the current spread of TV to various countries of the world.

Part of this collection has been published in a book titled *Radio Philatelia* (reviewed in our April, 1956, issue). Mr. Rosen kindly gave us permission to reproduce some of his rare stamps.

The hundredth anniversary of electric communications in Turkey, from the first use of wire telegraphy (1855) to modern radio, is celebrated in this 1955 stamp (left, below). The French stamp at its right illustrates early military radio, showing the antenna of the desert fort Sebha in the African colonies.



First transatlantic radio signal, broadcast from Cornwall, was received by Marconi at this tower overlooking the Newfoundland coast. Now a historic landmark, the tower was pictured in this memorial stamp issued in 1928. Spanning ocean by "wireless" gave rise to marine radio, ending ages of dreaded isolation for ships at sea.



Paris rooftops sprouted antennas when TV came to France. The Eiffel Tower, like the Empire State Building in New York, makes an ideal antenna mast for the city and its surroundings. With more than 800 lines, French TV boasts the world's best picture quality. The 1955 postage stamp (above, right) symbolizes TV signals radiating over Paris skyline. Guatemalan stamp (above, left) marks introduction of radio-telegraphy in South America.

Argentina's mail offers "spoken letters" recorded on discs. Special "Fonopostal" stamp is issued for this unique service.