

Finding Treasures

Many wrappers—though seemingly common—are just plain scarce.

Fred Schmitt



Before the days of polybags and little round seal tabs that are used to keep the pages of catalogs from flopping out, businesses and publications used to mail their catalogs, promotional flyers, newsletters, newspapers and periodicals by first placing them inside a flimsy wrapper and then, usually, applying postage. Those of us who grew up in the 1950s and were collecting stamps back then can well remember *Stamps Magazine*, *Mekeel's* and *Weekly Philatelic Gossip*—plus *The American Philatelist*—coming to us inside a protective wrapper.

And guess what happened to all those wrappers? The same thing that happens to most envelopes that carry the mails to you—they were immediately tossed into File X. This morning, I received my newspaper (as I usually do) inside a polyurethane plastic wrapper. I removed

the newspaper from it and put it in the recyclables bin. (Quick and easy. Of course, there were no stamps on that bag!)

What I am getting at here is the love affair some philatelists have with this form of postal history—even though it is difficult to form a really good collection of wrappers because, though not the rarest form of postal history and the most pricey, they are nevertheless fairly rare.

The wrappers shown above (especially the one with the one-cent 1857 stamp on it) are all in the \$200-plus range of retail pricing. The Chinese newspaper wrapper could fetch more than \$300 at auction if there are two or more bidders after it. It's colorful and valuable.

Seymour Banchik of New York sold his award-winning collection of worldwide wrappers not long ago. When much of it reached public auction, there was a mild feeding frenzy as a variety of postal history

collectors went after it. Such important pieces of mail are significant additions to virtually any kind of collection where covers and other forms of use are included. And the more exotic the better. Take, for instance, the colorful stamped (in red) newspaper wrapper from Zanzibar to London. Any cover from 19th century Zanzibar is rare enough. But this wrapper is a doozy!

I've devoted this issue's "Finding Treasures" to wrappers because, even though you may not collect them, watch for them in the bargain boxes at stamp shows. In many cases they are quite undervalued and can be purchased at very attractive prices.

And by the way, searching for these little gems just might whet your appetite for more of the same. You could do much, much worse than form a great collection of wrappers! ✉