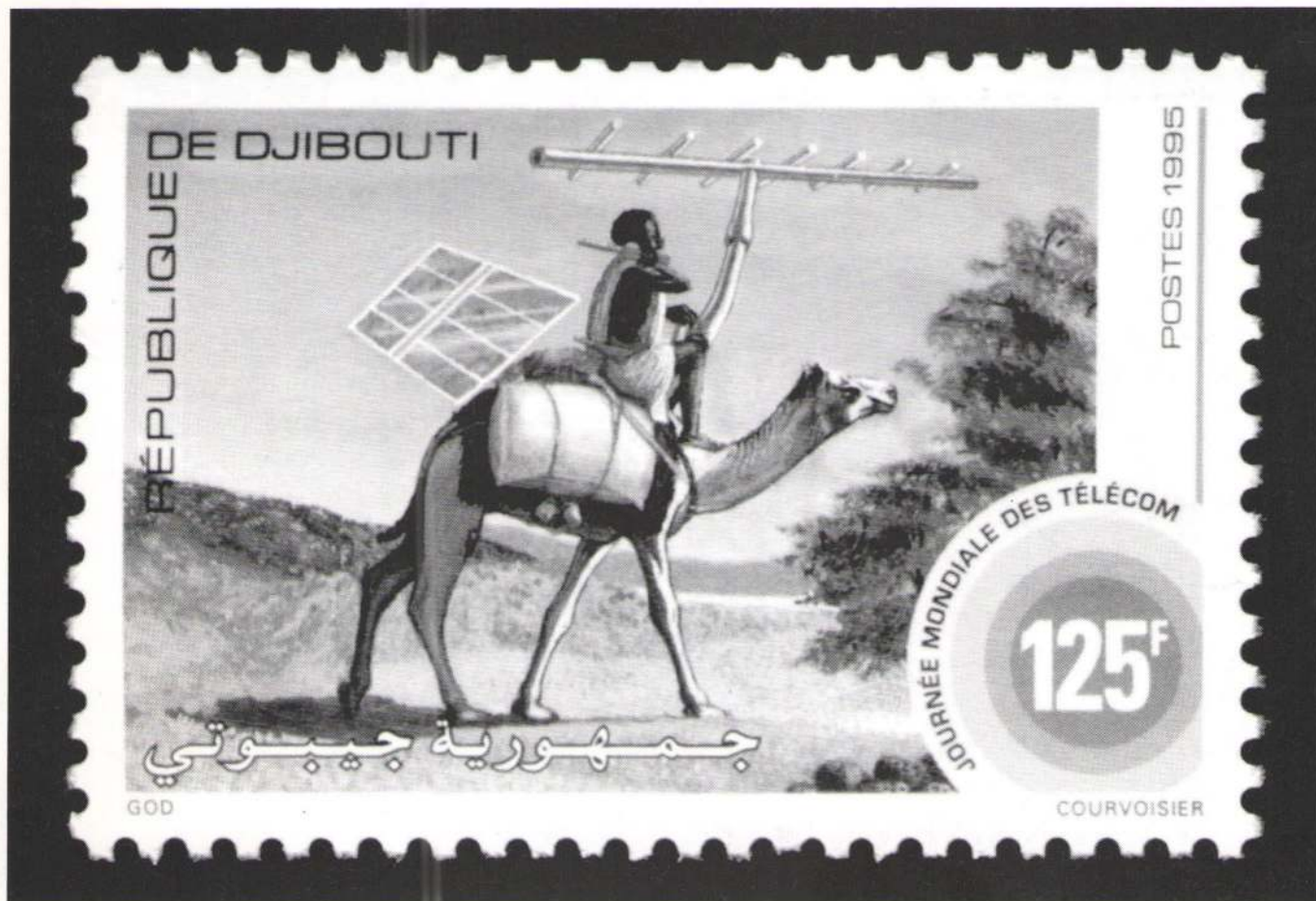


stamps - inventors & inventions

by Dr. Farag Moussa(President of IFIA)



The one inventor who can truly be said to have left his "stamp" on the future is almost unknown in the world of inventors. Indeed, who ever heard of Rowland Hill (1795-1879), the man who invented the postage stamp, that little piece of gummed paper which everyone uses today?

The son of an English schoolmaster, Hill thought up a way to reform the postal system that was currently in use - an impractical system in which the postage, based on weight and distance, was charged to the addressee. He advocated a uniform rate of postage to be paid by the sender instead - using stamps.

As is often the case with inventions, several people claimed to have had the same idea. Yet one thing is certain : Hill, who was later knighted by the queen, is the one who finally carried the project through. As the universally recognized inventor of the postage stamp, Sir Rowland has since been honored over and over again by postal services throughout the world, in particular on the centenary of his death (1979), the bicentenary of his birth (1995) and the 150th anniversary of the invention of the postage stamp (1990). Among the most beautiful commemorative issues printed on those various occasions are a truly magnificent one from Portugal and others from Chile, Ghana and the United Kingdom.

The first postage stamp thus saw the light of day in England - on 6 May 1840 to be precise. Its name? The Penny Black. Printed in black and white, it bore the profile of Queen Victoria, who was so pleased with her likeness that she had the drawing maintained on all the subsequent issues that were put out of the stamp throughout her sixty-year reign.

Postage stamps quickly spread from England to the rest of the world. In 1843, they were adopted in Brazil and in the Swiss cantons of Zurich and Geneva, and in 1845 the canton of Basel issued its famous Basel Dove - the first stamp to be printed in three colors. France, Belgium and Bavaria started putting out stamps in 1849, and other countries soon followed suit.

The first stamps were imperforate : perforated stamps, which are easier to detach, were only invented in 1851. The originator of this idea was Henry Ascher - an Englishman as well.

Sesquicentenario de la introducción del sello postal (1840 - 1990)

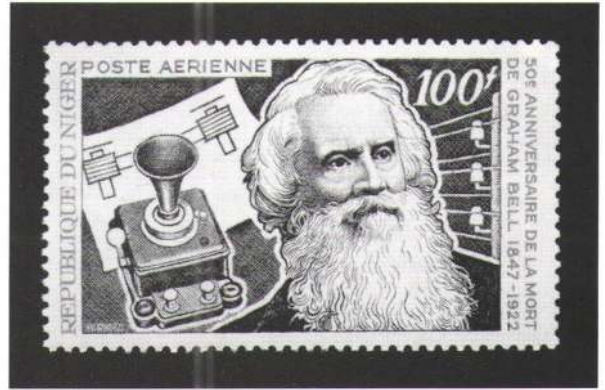
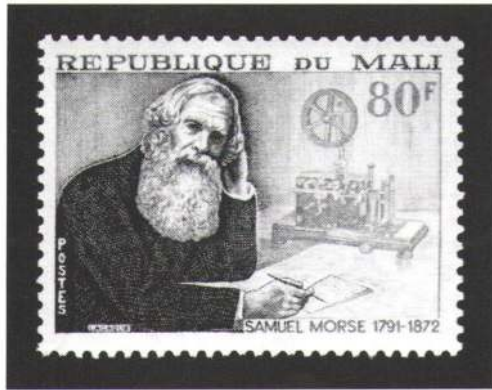


Until recently, all the postal services in the world were in charge of running the telegraph and telephone services as well. It is thus only natural that the following inventions, along with their inventors, should appear more frequently on stamps than any others : the electric telegraph, invented by Samuel Morse, an American, in 1837 ; wireless telegraphy, invented by Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian (patented in 1896 and first put into service in 1899) ; and the telephone, whose recognized inventor is Graham Bell, also an American (1876).

Among the other top ten great inventors most frequently depicted on postage stamps, Thomas Edison ranks high, portrayed alongside the most famous of his innumerable inventions : the incandescent lamp (1883).

Guglielmo Marconi has also received a lavish tribute for having invented the radio. In this particular field, however, he is not alone, sharing it both with contemporaneous inventors and with others who preceded or followed him. It is only fair that several countries should have recognized these inventors and put their names, portraits and inventions on various series of stamps. Those who have received such a distinction include Hertz, the German who gave his name to Hertzian waves, and Popov, a Russian, who invented the antenna.

Inventors who have won the Nobel Prize are a popular choice as well. Every year since 1963, Sweden, where the prize was established, has issued stamps commemorating those who won it sixty years earlier - in 1998, for example, those who won the prize in 1938. Other countries honor their own Nobel laureates.



Marie Curie-Sklodowska was awarded two Nobel Prizes : the physics prize in 1903 and the chemistry prize in 1911. Is that why she is so often portrayed on stamps (in France, of course, but even more so in Poland, her country of birth, and elsewhere too)? Or does it reflect her unique status a woman - an extraordinary woman - a female phenomenon in the male - dominated world of inventors?

Indeed, stamps are not generous towards women inventors. I have searched for them. I have pored over the stamp catalogues of all the countries in the world. And I have only found women inventors on the stamps of two countries - and not industrialized countries as could have been expected, but... Sierra Leone and the Philippines.

In 1995 Sierra Leone issued a block of stamps commemorating nine women Nobel laureates, among them three inventors, a Frenchwoman, an American and an Italian:

- Irène Joliot - Curie (chemistry) : artificial radioactivity
- Rosalyn Yalow (medicine) : radioimmunology
- Rita Levi - Montalcini (medicine) : growth factor in nerve cells

As for the Philippines, in 1993, it issued a pair of stamps for the fiftieth anniversary of the country's inventors' association. These stamps depict two inventions but do not mention the names of their inventors. As it so happens, I am personally acquainted with one of them and... she is a woman! To Magdalena Villaruz we owe the invention of a tool that might not automatically be associated with the fair sex : a motorized cultivator. Patented in 1976, the Turtle Power Tiller was especially designed for Asia's swampy fields, rice paddies in particular.

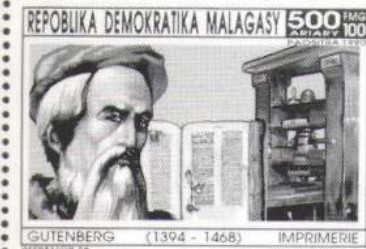


Most postal administrations are not chauvinistic. They honor their own countries' inventors, of course, but pay tribute to others as well. The most handsome stamps of this kind often come from the most unexpected places : Madagascar, for example, which printed a superb issue of sixteen stamps depicting inventors from Archimedes to Arthur Shawlow, who helped invent the laser in 1958.

To honor one's fellow citizens by putting them on stamps is to honor one's country and to draw attention to its great minds. And when an inventors' association such as the Argentinian one puts its shoulder to the wheel, the result can be quite surprising.

On 1 October 1994, the fiftieth anniversary of the invention which made Ladislao Jose Biro famous - the no less famous ballpoint pen - the Buenos Aires postal service issued a series of stamps honoring not only Biro but three other Argentinian inventors as well. The event was marked by the publication of several magnificently illustrated brochures which the president of the Argentinian Inventors' Association had in great part researched and written himself. An exhibition of contemporary Argentinian inventions was even held on that occasion at the central post office, while at another exhibition the public could admire an extraordinary collection comprising thousands of different ballpoint pens. All these events received broad media coverage.

REPOBLIKA DEMOKRATIKA MALAGASY



The most popular stamps of all times picture the various inventions that have been made in the area of transport and locomotion. People young and old love to collect stamps of this kind, showing a certain preference for those that depict early prototypes and the men who pioneered, invented and manufactured them. These series are also the most beautiful of their kind, and include stamps showing automobiles, motorcycles, bicycles, boats, locomotives, fire engines, the earliest flying machines, balloons, montgolfiers, zeppelins, airplanes and various other inventions.

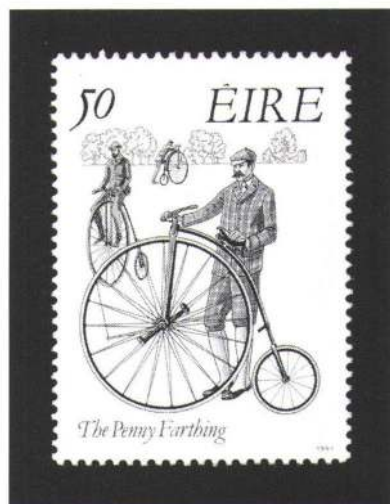
As usual, Walt Disney jumped onto the bandwagon. Children are delighted with his "Merry Christmas" stamps, on which Mickey Mouse is shown driving his girlfriend Minnie around in exact replicas of famous makes of cars (Ford, Jeep, Lancia, Mercedes).

I know of only one stamp that pays a humorous tribute to the spirit of invention: it is an American stamp illustrated with a drawing by the famous cartoonist Rube Goldberg, who specializes in whimsical inventions. And then there is the stamp which appears on the cover of this brochure and which was designed by an artist from Djibouti named God. With wry wit it depicts the clash of cultures represented by a camel driver equipped with every ultramodern invention in the field of telecommunications.

What about other high-tech inventions? Take rockets, for example: every one of them is there. All of them are depicted on stamps the world over, from the earliest models on. Yet unlike inventions of earlier times, whenever they are accompanied by portraits these are not portraits of inventors but of astronauts, our modern-day heroes. If no inventors appear on these stamps, it may also reflect the fact that highly sophisticated inventions such as rockets are not the brainchild of a single inventor, or even of a single main inventor, but are the result of a huge collaborative effort.

When it comes to recent inventions, we also lack the benefit of hindsight. It took many years before the inventors of the past gained sufficient recognition to be passed down to posterity via postage stamps, and stamps honoring the men of genius to be found in the mind-boggling world of computers are still extremely rare. Nowhere in the world can Bill Gates be seen on an envelope - yet.

If it is portraits of inventors you are looking for, you had better turn to the past.



When it comes to creating stamps of great beauty, some inventions are more naturally suited to the job than others. The cinema, in particular, is ideal. A number of postal services did not simply illustrate their stamps with a picture of the Lumiere brothers or a movie camera, but commemorated the invention of the cinema with a whole series of pictures of actors. An excellent idea.

However, it is not enough to have ideas : the artist's touch is needed to bring them off. Among the many gems that come to mind is a stamp that was issued in 1987 for the commemoration of the invention of the record player. It was designed by a Portuguese artist and is surely the most dazzling stamp ever printed.

Countries with very old civilizations, such as China and Iran, adorn their stamps with inventions that are hundreds and often thousands of years old: weapons, surgical instruments, musical instruments and numerous other inventions, many of which are the ancestors of ones in use today.



1887-1987
CENTENARIO
DO DISCO

Portugal
75.

1887-1987
CENTENARIO
DO DISCO

Portugal
125.

1887-1987 CENTENARIO DO DISCO



CORREIOS E TELECOMUNICAÇÕES DE PORTUGAL

preço 200\$

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone

Le. 12

100th Anniversary of
the Motorcycle

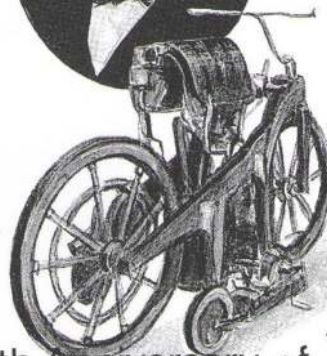


African Transport



100th Anniversary of

the Motorcycle



• Decade for

Gottlieb Daimler & the 1885 Einstur

African Transport



100th Anniversary of

the Motorcycle



The idea of the exhibition Stamps : Inventors & Inventions was conceived by Dr. Farag Moussa, President of the International Federation of Inventors' Associations, who also wrote the text for this souvenir-brochure.

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P.O. Box 299, 1211 Geneva 12, Switzerland

E-mail: invention-iffia@bluewin.ch

Website: <http://www.invention-iffia.ch>

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