

## *Fabulous Firsts:* **Victoria** (January 3, 1850)

Located in southeast Australia, Victoria today is Australia's smallest state, with its main population centers being Port Phillip and Melbourne.

In the late 18th century, while still only inhabited by Aboriginals, Victoria was visited by whalers and sealing parties. In 1788, Great Britain claimed the area and included Victoria in the colony of New South Wales.

Following explorations around the turn of the century, the first European settlement in the area was established in 1803, consisting primarily of convicts, officials and soldiers. Although many of the convicts escaped, and the remaining party was withdrawn to Van Diemens Land, the seed for future growth had been planted.

Another short-lived settlement of convicts was made in 1826, but in 1834 two parties arrived from Van Diemens Land and founded the first permanent settlement. In August 1835, Governor Darling declared that the Port Phillip settlement was part of the colony of New South Wales.

In 1851, with a population of 77,000, Victoria became independent from New South Wales, and with the discovery of gold, the population grew even more rapidly. Meanwhile the Australian Colonies Government Act was passed in August 1849 and the separation from distant government from Sydney in western Australia went into effect following the passage of the New South Wales Assembly on July 1, 1851.

Postal activities paralleled this political growth. While still part of New South Wales, the first post office was opened in the newly established Melbourne in 1837, and by 1850 45 post offices had been opened in Victoria.

The first postage stamps were issued on January 3, 1850, the "Half Lengths". Unlike the usual practice of having stamps of the colonies printed in England, Victoria opted to produce its first stamps locally—a practice that continued throughout its stamp issuing period.

In 1850 stamp production facilities in Victoria were very limited. This explains why the first stamps of Victoria are crude relative to the first issues from most of the British colonies. The production processes being primitive and the almost 30 printings of these stamps also accounts for the many varieties, some of them very rare, that are an important part of studying the first issue of Victoria.

The first printing, by Thomas Ham of Melbourne, was in a quantity of 9,600, issued in sheets of 30. While the intended issue color is described as orange vermillion, that shade is an extreme rarity. Gibbons thus gives this as its primary #1. Scott's policy is to assign the major number to the most widely produced variety, and thus lists dull red as its #1.

A great resource for a study of all of the stamps of Victoria is <http://www.stampsofvictoria.com/>. We refer you to that site for a detailed viewing of the many printings and shades, and reproduce here from that site only the orange vermillion (from the first printing) and dull red (from the third printing). I did not want to play with the colors, so the images are not the best for detail...but then, that is how the stamps actually look. So to the right, we show an example with more detail. Actually, this is the only known



*Left, orange vermillion  
right, dull red*

unused example of the orange vermillion, but the color is off from the actual color; however, it



is a good presentation of the detail in the stamp.

(Note: while Scott lumps the results of all of the printings of the first 1p under #1, Gibbons separates states of the die, so the dull red is SG #8a.)

Scott does list another 1p as Scott 2, that listing being for later printings in distinctive shades, the major listing being rose.

There also are two Types, with all of Scott 2 being Type II and Scott 1 encompassing Type I as well as Type II stamps. The early and scarcer printings, such as orange vermillion are Type I.

The difference between the two Types is the line of color in the frame above “Victoria”. Shown here, the line of color is thin on Type I and wider on Type II.



Continuing with the 1850 issue, Scott 3 is a 3p Type I, major color blue and Scott 4 is a 3p Type II, major color indigo. The Types are distinguished by the orb on the scepter held by Queen Victoria.



The 1850 3p light blue Type II (Sc. 3a; SG 7) tied by oval handstamps on a J. Valentine Ocean Penny Postage propaganda cover to London, England, with red “Ship Letter Melbourne OC 9 1852” and London backstamps, endorsed “By Ship Marco Polo” at center, also with a manuscript “8” due mark.



Also part of the first issue is a 2p—actually four listings, Scott 5 through 8.

In this denomination there are three Types. Left to right, Type I (Sc. 5) has two sets of nine wavy lines criss-crossing in the left and right borders and 22 groups of wavy lines



below “Victoria” (arrows). Type II (Sc. 6) also has two sets of nine wavy lines criss-crossing in the left and right borders but 15 groups of wavy lines below “Victoria”. Type III has only five sets of wavy lines in the borders and 15 sets of wavy lines below “Victoria”. Type III is found in shades of lilac (Sc. 7) and yellow brown (Sc. 8). [Reminder: for a closer look, use your pdf magnifier tool.]

To complete the Victoria First Issue listings, the 1p and 3p rouletted 7 are Sc. 9 and 10, respectively; and the 3p perf 12 is Sc. 12.

The “Half Lengths” were replaced by the full length “Queen-on-Throne” design, beginning in 1852 with the 2p reddish brown, Scott 14 (right), with additional shades in 1854.



A cover to Cork, Ireland with endorsement “per Oliver Lang” at bottom left, with a horizontal strip of four of the Victoria 1p Half Length and a single of the 1852 2p tied by “2V” in oval cancels, also with “Geelong Victoria AU 20, 1855”, Melbourne and receiving backstamps.



While Victoria was part of New South Wales, the stamps of both colonies were valid throughout the area, and only two or three of the cancellations identified Victoria as the point of origin. The first distinct Victoria postmark was the “butterfly” type, used in 1850-1 by the first 45 Post Offices, shown at right on Scott 5.



Starting in July 1851 the second series, the “barred oval”, was used and numbers are known up to 50. The cover on page 4 bears barred oval cancels with numeral 2 V (the V being for Victoria).

Victoria joined the UPU in 1891 at the same time as the other Australian colonies and, following Federation in 1901, continued to issue its own stamps until 1913.

*Pre-stamp, an 1842 PAID SHIP LETTER SYDNEY cover to Glasgow. While not related to mail from Victoria, it does present an excellent example of the time taken to move the mail, with a May or March 1842 postmark on the front and an August 11, 1843 receiver on the back.*

