

World of Topicals:

Circus Stamps of the World

By John F. Dunn

The 2014 United States Vintage Circus Posters sheet and the Vintage Circus Souvenir Sheet, both pictured here, have attracted renewed interest to stamp collecting in general and the Circus on Stamps theme in particular.



POSTERS

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It should come as no surprise that a theme as popular as the circus should be featured on many stamps, and in this review we will present a sampling of the stamps, covers, and other related collectibles that can be part of a Circus on Stamps collection.

To find more than enough examples for this assemblage all I had to do was run an internet search for Circus Stamps. With that I was presented with hundreds, if not more than a thousand, choices. As a result, and because I wanted to attract new collectors using the Circus theme, this article will be in two parts.

What you will see here is ‘only the beginning,’ and it will then be continued on our StampNewsNow articles archive.

And just as there is a tremendous array of Circus stamps from which we can choose, there also are scores of informative sites where we can find background on the circus and its history. I will provide two website links for your use at the end of the complete article on StampNews Now; for my purposes, I relied on the free access Wikipedia site. So let’s take a look at the Circus on stamps and covers and how to collect them.

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The first thing to keep in mind is that “circus” as we know it today is very different from how it originally was used. The word actually derives from the Latin *circus*, which is the romanization of the Greek *kirkos*, meaning “circle” or “ring”.

In Ancient Rome, the circus was a **building** (not an event) for the exhibition of horse and chariot races, equestrian shows, staged battles, gladiatorial combat and displays of (and fights with) trained animals. The first circus in the city of Rome was the Circus Maximus. After being rebuilt several times, the final version of the Circus Maximus could seat 250,000 people. Shown here is a stamp from a Tunisia set of 2nd-5th century Roman Mosaics, in this case picturing Circus Spectators.



After the fall of Rome, large circus buildings fell out of use as centers of mass entertainment. Instead, itinerant performers, animal trainers and showmen travelled between towns throughout Europe, performing at local fairs.

And while on the subject of what is **not** a circus as we know it today, Piccadilly Circus, in London, is a traffic circle, not an event. Instead, going back to the Roman “circus” it is the open area and junction in London’s West End, built in 1819 to connect Regent Street with Piccadilly.

We see on page 1 a picture post card and here on a Gambia souvenir sheet showing Mickey Mouse and Daisy Duck get “directions” from London Bobby, Goofy.

These two pieces are examples of the range of material that can be included in a Circus Stamps Collection; and with that, in order to present as many images as possible, I will carry over this introduction and continue the presentation in our StampNewsNow article archive, at:

<http://www.stampnewsnow.com/#>

