New Zealand Presents Itself to the World through Stamps

by Robert P. Odenweller

Until the 1890s, the postage stamps of virtually all the countries of the British Empire bore some version of an image of Queen Victoria. They ranged from the popular portrait of her as a teen-age queen in her coronation robes, painted by Alfred E. Chalon in 1838, to versions showing her in “widow’s weeds.”

The centennial issues of New South Wales, which appeared in 1888, included a modest selection of indigenous animals (a kangaroo) and birds (an emu and “superb lyrebird”), and a view of Sydney. These led to suggestions that “New Zealand should issue a set of stamps ‘symbolical of the land.’”¹ In August 1894, Mr. C. Lewis, variously a Member of Parliament in the province of Canterbury, submitted proofs of a series of stamps that he had printed by his own process. These were in four colors on thick white wove paper, and showed the Chalon portrait and a steamer with auxiliary sails, along with a narrow scroll that read “The Lewis Engraving Process.”

On December 28, 1894, the New Zealand Cabinet decided to have a new issue of postage stamps, and directed that a design competition be held, with prizes for those selected. The initial draft of the circular, which appeared a month later, gave the Queen’s head equal preference to “a scene or event characteristic of New Zealand in particular.”² The final version of the rules, dated March 1895, omitted reference to the Queen’s head, and the decision was to make the issue a pictorial one.

Prizes of £150 and £100 were offered, with various specifications outlined. The designs “must include a representation of characteristic or notable New Zealand scenery or genre,” and were to be of one of two specific sizes, of which the U.S. Columbian issue was mentioned as the larger model. All submissions were to be in color and all would become the property of the Postmaster-General. It was intended that each applicant submit a total of 11 different designs, to correspond to the 11 denominations that were to be printed. A later decision added two denominations.

About 2,400 designs were submitted, ranging from “the crudest of drawings to the finished product of an artist.”³ A natural choice of design element was the kiwi, a flightless bird unique to New Zealand and now the symbol most closely connected with the country. Until the arrival of humans, New Zealand had only a very wide range of unusual birds and no land mammals. Some of these were chosen by entrants as subjects, such as the pied fantail, a highly acrobatic and friendly denizen of the bush. Other themes included the Maori and historical events, such as the Reverend Samuel Marsden arriving in New Zealand, and the Treaty of Waitangi.

Scenery was easier to illustrate. Mt. Cook, the highest in New Zealand, was featured successfully in the stamps that were ultimately selected, along with Milford Sound, Lake Taupo, and other geographical features unique to the country.

The full set of designs submitted went on tour, to be exhibited in each of New Zealand’s chief cities. They were open display in Wellington during September 1895, with the net proceeds given to charity, as was also the case when they were shown in Christchurch, Dunedin and Auckland. Certain of the designs were stolen while on display.

¹ The Postage Stamps of New Zealand (Vol. I), p. 139.
² PSNZ, p. 140
³ PSNZ, p. 140,
Cabbage Tree by Cousins

Pied Fantail by Anonymous

Maori by A. Jones

Maori and Settler by Anonymous

Kiwi and Whare by Anonymous

Treaty of Waitangi by A. Jones

Kiwi by Anonymous

Kiwis by Cousins

On the Waimakariiui by Anonymous

A selection from the 1898 Pictorial competition (ex Baillie).
The Selection

After a preliminary selection, the Secretary of the General Post Office, W. Gray, gave advice to the Postmaster-General about a number of considerations for the new issue. These included that the larger of the two sizes of the designs were to be reserved for higher priced stamps and for those to be used on overseas mail, to advertise the Colony abroad. Production costs were to be controlled, with only one of the denominations to be produced in two colors. The work was to be done in London, to obtain work of the “best engravers,” and “the cost of the engraving will be covered many times over by the anticipated sales to stamp collectors, which is variously estimated at from £20,000 to £40,000.”

A board of five experts made the final selection. Five entrants accounted for all thirteen denominations, with two having four each and two having only a single success. One of those with four acceptances was W.R. Bock, who had previously designed a number of postage stamps for New Zealand.

Production Problems

Besides the earlier stipulations on how the pictorial issue was to appear, the Stamp Office wrote to the Agent-General in London and added that “the dies are to be engraved on steel and adapted to the letterpress printing process. They should be engraved so deeply that impressions may be taken from which electros could be prepared in the Colony.” It was not originally intended to have a printing in London, but that all work would be done in the colony. Many of the stipulations appear to have been ignored. In hindsight, however, these differences from what was requested have added greatly to the philatelic appreciation of the issue.

Initially, the designs were submitted to the printing firm, Messrs. De La Rue. While that company considered the artwork to be eminently satisfactory, the designs were not easily adapted to the letterpress or surface printing process then in use in New Zealand. De La Rue suggested the use of recess (engraved) printing. The idea of a changeover of equipment in New Zealand, along with associated costs and delay, resulted in a deadlock, and De La Rue returned the designs to the Agent General.

In the meantime, the printer Waterlow & Sons had been approached, and they prepared specimen dies of two types, for comparison purposes. One was for surface printing and the other was for printing from a steel plate. The Premier of New Zealand, R.J. Seddon, who was in London at the time, was shown both examples and sent a cable to New Zealand, saying “Stamps new design steel-plate and surface printer’s proof have been produced here. Premier considers steel-proof infinitely superior.” Cabinet approved the concept on August 5, 1897, and Waterlows were instructed to proceed.

The new issue was intended for release on January 1, 1891. Since production time was critically short, a six-month supply was ordered to be printed in London. It is natural to expect that with less than four months before the target release date, problems would develop. The 2½d stamp, which shows Lake Wakatipu, was incorrectly spelled Wakitipu (with an incorrect “i” rather than an “a”), and 300,000 copies were printed. The Agent-General forwarded the first shipment of stamps from London to New Zealand on January 20, 1898. He noted at the time that the stamp had the error in spelling, and added that the final disposition the “error” stamps should be decided in New Zealand. He also mentioned that

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4 PSNZ, p. 141.
5 PSNZ, p. 142.
6 PSNZ, p. 144.
a telegram from the Minister, “which was evidently intended to direct attention to the error, was so
incorrectly transmitted that its meaning could not be understood.”

A new die and plate were prepared, but the “error,” which was released with the remainder of
the denominations on April 5, enhanced the popularity of the issue. Only a month later, a new six-
month supply was ordered. “On July 9, 1898, the Audit Department objected to the printing and
selling of the stamps in England,” and they were withdrawn from sale in London in November.

Waterlow & Sons pointed out an interesting feature of the difference between the engraved
plates and those used for surface printing. They stressed the necessity of differential engraving
to suit the various colors, while admitting that dies for surface printing would suit any color. As a
result, they recommended alterations of the colors as originally selected for the ½d, 4d, 6d, 8d, and
1/- stamps. Some of these were changed for subsequent printings.

The most striking disregard of specifications given by the New Zealand administration was in the
size of the stamps and numbers of stamps on each plate. The original order had been intended
for surface printing, which the New Zealand printer had been using for 24 years. It also specified
the need for sheets of the small size stamps to have 240 subjects, with 120 to a sheet of the large size,
where those stamps were to be double the size of the small stamps. This was to make perforation
more standard, and therefore easier to execute without unnecessary adjustments to the machine.
As processed by Waterlow, the initial order disregarded both criteria. Most of the plates held 120
impressions only, with the 1d plate having only 80, and the 5/- having 60 impressions.

The need to create new plates that took care of some of the problems required that the original
plates remain in London where additional supplies could be prepared. The 1d and 4d designs were
swapped, from the most used to the least used denomination, with the additional restriction that
they be made the uniform “small” size, and on plates with 240 impressions. In addition, the ½d and
2d plates were to be expanded to 240 impressions each, with a total plate size restriction. Waterlow
advised in response that the bi-color 4d would have to remain at a sheet of 80 for accuracy of the
two colors to be printed.

Waterlow prepared a separate set of new plates to send to New Zealand. The original plates were
never forwarded to New Zealand after local printings had started. Four of the new plates Waterlow
sent to New Zealand were useless due to the changed designs. All Waterlow printings were on
unwatermarked paper, but the unwatermarked paper they supplied to New Zealand seems to have
been more suited to surface printing.

Perforation by Waterlow varied strangely from a gauge of 12 to 16 from stamp to stamp, but was
accurately applied. Locally, perforation was initially 11, then 14, sometimes with the perf 11 used
to correct problems with the newer, but less reliable, perf 14 machine. The local printings changed
to watermarked paper during the use of the perf 11 machine and continued for the remainder of
the issues.

All of these production problems created five major groups of the issues, with a number of
smaller variations. These are very popular among both beginning and advanced collectors today. One
may express thanks that the original desire to use surface printing instead of the engraved version
that resulted was not observed, and that the premier’s influence was successful. The comparison
between the originals and the centenary issues, issued in 1998 and which replicate the surface
printed version, makes this quite clear.

7 PSNZ, p. 154.
8 PSNZ, p. 145.

The 2/- in the engraved version as printed in London in 1898 (left), compared with the surface-printed 1998 centennial ver-
sion (right). The original intention was for all of this issue to have been surface printed.
The Designs and Individual Problems

½d Mount Cook. This lilac-brown stamp was short-lived, being replaced by a somewhat smaller version in green, which finally met the original request for the uniform smaller size. Besides showing New Zealand’s tallest mountain, which is called Aorangi in the Maori language, the oval is flanked by a nod to two examples of unique alpine flora, the Mt. Cook lily (ranunculus) and the Mountain Daisy (celmisia). This version was printed only in London.

1d (and later the 4d) Lake Taupo. As a bi-color stamp, printed in light brown with a blue center, this was seen as another mistake, since it was a costly way of printing a stamp that would have seen very heavy use. To have printed the same number of 1d stamps as printed the year before would have taken 44 weeks with smaller plates and two colors.9

The design shows Lake Taupo, New Zealand’s largest, with an area of approximately 240 square miles, in the center of the North Island. A very active volcano, Mt. Ruapehu, is seen in the background, where it is joined by two other volcanoes. A “cabbage tree” at the left was so named because early settlers used the young and tender heads in place of cabbage. Again, the 1d version was printed only in London, with the design transposed with the 4d stamp in 1900.

When the new die was engraved, the 4d design differed in many small details from the 1d version. Although it was put on sale at the end of August 1899, the 1d Terraces replacement had not been issued and the 1d bicolor was still being used. Speculation resulted when the new stamps were withdrawn as a result of the conflict, and both new versions were issued on March 7, 1900.

2d Pembroke Peak, in Milford Sound. The deep fiord of Milford Sound is on the southwest coast of New Zealand’s South Island, and is the remains of glacier action in “one of the oldest parts of the earth’s surface.”10 Access to the area is difficult, either by sea or overland, but the spectacular scenery is worth the effort to get there. Pembroke Peak is almost 7,000 feet high, with the waters of Milford Sound going over 1,500 feet deep.

The original design was larger than the specified size for a small-format stamp. A new version, which met the smaller specifications, was created by Waterlow for local printing. Besides size, they differ slightly in minor design details.

2½d View of Mr. Earnslaw and head of Lake Wakatipu. This is the third largest lake in New Zealand, extending roughly 50 miles long but averaging only two miles in width. It is about 1,000 feet above sea level, but the bottom is below sea level. Mt. Earnslaw rises about 8,000 feet. The flora in the design include New Zealand flax, which is unique to New Zealand and the Norfolk Islands, “toe-toe” grass, which is similar to pampas grass of Argentina, and the cabbage tree.

The original version, the “Wakitipu” error, includes the name “Mt. Earnslaw” in the lower left corner, along with “Postage & Revenue” under the words New Zealand at upper left. In the corrected “Wakatipu” form, the “Postage & Revenue” have been relocated to the bottom left, displacing the name “Mt. Earnslaw,” which no longer appears on the stamp. Sales of the “error” stamp were speculative and brisk, making genuinely used copies scarcer than the unused, which themselves are more common than the unused of the “normal” stamp.

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9 PSNZ, p. 174.
10 PSNZ, p. 151.
**3d Huias.** Now extinct, the Huias were once quite common in a few mountain ranges. They are notable for a distinctive difference between the male Huia and the female. On the female, the bright yellow beak was long, curved and flexible, while that of the male was straight and much shorter. These differences are believed to be due to feeding habits, where the female found the grub of a wood-boring beetle in the core of the wood, while the male was content to find his in the decaying wood near the bark.\(^\text{11}\) The white-tipped tail feathers were prized and worn by those who held the rank of chief or high station (see the 3d of the 1935 issue). The high demand for these and other decorative uses are considered to be the reason for the birds being hunted to extinction.

Although the 3d plate was larger than the desired size of a small-format stamp, it was not until 1907 that a new plate of the desired size was put to use, only a year before the stamps were superseded.

**4d (and later the 1d) View of White Terrace, Rotomahana.** Similar to scenes found in Yellowstone National Park, Rotomahana’s Pink and White Terraces were both destroyed in the eruption of Mt. Tarawera in 1886. As part of the major attraction of Rotorua, on the North Island, many geysers and other terraces remain, but those are considered not to be comparable with the two major attractions that were buried. The plants on either side are brambles, similar to blackberry or raspberry, and called Tataramoa in Maori.

The reengraved 1d version was in use for less than a year before being replaced by the 1d Universal stamp on January 1, 1901.

**5d Otira Gorge, with Mt. Ruapehu in a circular frame.** The main route across the Southern Alps from Canterbury to Westland, Otira Gorge was a deep and narrow coach road that follows a river fed by glaciers. The road had steep sides and was subject to rock slides. It is picturesque with different types of vegetation at different altitudes. Unusual in this design is that Mt. Ruapehu, which is a volcano on the North Island, is shown in the circle at lower left, almost an attempt to get the most mileage out of the design.

**6d Kiwi.** A symbol linked to New Zealand, the kiwi is a most unusual bird. It evolved in a country that, before the arrival of humans, had no native mammals, with birds filling all of the functions found by ground-dwellers elsewhere. Its feathers are long and similar to hair, it has a long beak and the unique location of its nostrils at the end of the beak. This sense of smell allows it to find worms and other food on the ground and in leaf litter, where they can be heard sniffing loudly while feeding.

The 6d design was again too large for the small-format stamp and originally issued in green, both in London and then in the first local issue, after which the color was changed to red. Again, the reduced size version was introduced in 1907, only a year before the series was discontinued.

**8d War Canoe.** This is a composite design with a prominent figure “8” flanked by ferns and cabbage trees. The fern is, as with the kiwi, a symbol of New Zealand that is found as a regularly recurring emblem on stamps currently issued by the country. An imperial crown is in the upper loop and a Maori war canoe in the lower.

Again too large, the 8d denomination was not extensively used so a new plate was not required.

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\(^{11}\) *PSNZ*, p. 155.
9d Pink Terrace, Rotomahana. Also destroyed in the eruption of Mt. Tarawera, the pink terrace was smaller than the white terrace and sat on the opposite bank of Lake Rotomahana. In each case, the top level was a boiling pool, with the waters cooling as they cascaded to the lower levels. The terrace design is flanked by the tree-fern and nikau palm at the sides. The nikau palm has the ability to withstand fires and grows to about 30 feet. The top of the stem is fleshy and juicy, and is edible. The berries are very hard but relished by the wild parrots, the “kakas,” which are seen on the 1/- denomination. The leaves were used for the roofs and walls of Maori dwellings since they were very durable and shed water through small natural channels in the surface of the leaves.

1/- Kea and Kaka. Although the official designation stated that these were both examples of the kaka, the left bird is the distinctly different kea. The kea roosts in rocks in South Island mountains and has partially nocturnal habits. Although it was once accused of attacking lambs, an investigation has shown that this is not proven. The kaka resembles the kea but is slightly smaller and has a heavier, curved beak. Unlike the kea, it prefers to inhabit trees and is very sociable, which unfortunately has led to their being reduced in numbers.

A smaller version finally appeared in late 1907, remaining in use for not much more than a year.

2/- Milford Sound. The horizontal format is much more suitable than the cramped view seen in the 2d stamp. This view includes Mitre Peak, which is one of New Zealand’s best-known scenic views, with its top a mile above where it plunges directly into the sound. A clump of cabbage palms forms part of the frame on the left.

5/- Mount Cook. Although repeating a version of the design shown on the ½d value, this is much more imposing and visually very successful. The small lake in the foreground is called “Red Lake” in recognition of the crimson water-lilies that fill it in season. On the left is the base of Mt. Sefton, with Mt. Wakefield at the right.

Few of the two highest denomination stamps would have been used for overseas mail, or to encourage tourism. The most likely uses would have been on packages, for telegrams and for fiscal purposes. Income from sales to collectors would have yielded a substantial profit as contrasted with cost of production.

The Effectiveness of the 1898 Pictorial Definitives

Although the design competition brought many ideas, valid criticism of the time pointed out that there were “two Milfords, two Terraces, and two Mt. Cooks.” The London prints, which were produced from plates that were never sent to New Zealand, were on fine quality unwatermarked paper with a distinctive irregular gauge but finely cut perforations, are almost anachronistic as compared with the local prints. Those local prints went from unwatermarked to watermarked paper, with perforations shifting from 11 to 14 and combinations of the two. At the end of the life of the issue, some of the designs were finally reduced to the desired size, employing new comb perforations. Further, there was the need to switch the bi-colored design from the 1d to the 4d, and to correct the “error” design of the 2 ½d.

The philatelic richness of all these changes has made them very popular. Most fortunate was the decision to use the engraved version instead of the surface printed one. The latter appeared 100 years later and the difference between the two is striking. Premier Seddon’s preference made a major difference.

The designs that were rejected contained elements that would return almost thirty years later when a new design competition was conducted.

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12 PSNZ, p. 172.
A selection of essays submitted for the competition for the 1935 pictorials.
The Second Pictorial Definitives of 1935 to 1947

By 1931, postage stamps bearing the portrait of King George V had been in use for 16 years, and the New Zealand Cabinet approved a competition for a new set of stamps, using rules similar to those used in 1898. As before, photographs were excluded, dimensions, sizes and denominations were given. The prize was £25 for each adopted stamp, with a proviso that for any design used within five years of the series, the designer would receive £15. The announcement said, in part:

“The design of each stamp must include a representation of characteristic, or notable New Zealand scenery or genre, or industrial, agricultural, or pastoral scene.”

As in 1898, a panel of five was appointed, including two eminent philatelists. They decided that “The entries were divided into subject groups and it was agreed that of the fourteen designs to be selected there should be three depicting New Zealand fauna, three including representative scenery, three devoted to Maori subjects, two representing agricultural and pastoral scenes, and one each portraying an historical subject, sport and Maori art.”

That policy was criticized by those who complained that the divisions had not been made clear at the start. Few entries depicted agricultural, pastoral and historical subjects, for example, while many were of scenic beauty. As with the desire for surface printing in 1898, the intention for this issue was to be printed by photogravure. Waterlow & Sons submitted proofs for all but the 9d, which was not suitable for any method other than lithography. They further suggested that photogravure should be abandoned and line-engraved plates be used. Finally, the accepted design for the 1/- stamp was seen to be fine at poster size, but when reduced to stamp size was not suitable.

Unfortunately for Waterlow, this caused the High Commissioner to choose Waterlow for only the 9d stamp, and all the others to be produced by De La Rue. Curiously, this reversed the choice of printers found with the 1898 pictorials. Proofs finally arrived at the end of 1933. After efforts to resolve initial paper and watermark production problems, more were found in printing, and ultimately a change was made to a multiple watermark. As with the 1898 issues, perforations were quite varied and interesting during the production of the issue, the changes made for various reasons.

**Designs of the 1935 Pictorials**

**1½d Pied Fantail.** This is a design quite similar to one provided in the 1898 competition, and shows this very sociable native New Zealand bird, along with the best-known flowers of the New Zealand bush, the clematis. In flight, the “piwakawaka” chases small insects, using its tail for rapid changes of direction. It is very friendly toward people and performs a beneficial service in feeding on sandflies and orchard pests. The New Zealand clematis, of which there are two species, has a sweet scent.

This denomination was short-lived, since the death of King George V and the eventual succession of King George VI led to the replacement of three lower denominations. All unsold sheets of the 1½d were withdrawn from sale on February 28, 1938, and remainders destroyed.

**1d Kiwi.** It is almost unthinkable to have a series of stamps of New Zealand that do not include the unique kiwi. This design was offered by R.J.G. Collins and his daughter, he a major stamp dealer and expert. The Maori panels on the sides of the original design as submitted were based on Maori carving from the “rapa,” or stern ornament of a war canoe. When redrawn, however, they were based on the wooden slabs in the model meeting-house at Rotorua.

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13 *PSNZ*, p. 339.
14 *PSNZ*, p. 349.
This major denomination appeared in many forms, including booklets and coils. Many different varieties attracted collector interest, but as with the ½d, the stamp was replaced by a King George VI design and withdrawn from sale on June 30, 1938, with remainders destroyed.

1½d Maori Cooking. Thermal hot springs in New Zealand offer a constantly available heat source for cooking. In this case, a young Maori woman lowers a “kete” basket of flax into a boiling hot spring. She wears a “pare” (headband) and from her waist hangs a “piu-piu” made from flax blades. The “pou-pou” side panels alternate with reed-work (“tukutuku”) that is found on the inside walls of the larger Maori “whares,” or houses.

As with the other two lower denominations, this was replaced on July 26, 1938. On the day that it was replaced, New Zealand instituted the “Empire All-Up Airmail” service, which would require only 1½d for air postage anywhere in the British Empire. The rate lasted only a year until World War II broke out, but very few of the pictorial stamps were used for this service since the King George VI version was available.

2d Whare. Again, a design proposed for the 1898 issue finally became used, and the designer had been successful in the earlier competition. The whare is a carved house made of raupo or, in modern times, of fluted boarding used to represent reed-work. The left background includes a tree fern while to the right is another example of the cabbage tree. Many elements of Maori carving are evident in the design.

2½d Mount Cook. This popular design appears only once in this series, flanked more prominently this time by Mt. Cook lilies. The view is as seen from the Hermitage, a popular hotel in an alpine meadow in the mountain district. The photo was taken in 2001 from the Hermitage.

3d Maori Girl. Wearing a headband of plaited flax, dyed red and black, this is the first stamp for regular postage issued in New Zealand with a portrait of someone other than the monarch. A feather of the extinct huia, which was omitted from the original proof, is inserted in the headband, and a tiki is suspended from her neck. This was the only value of the set where the photogravure version was considered to be effective. Typical Maori designs make up the border. The engraver “just missed obtaining the characteristic nose and lip lines of the Polynesian race, with the result that the portrait leans towards a European type.”

The 3d denomination, along with the three lowest denominations of this issue, was replaced by the new issue showing King George VI. It was determined that after the death of King George V and the brief reign of King Edward VIII, that some measure of respect be given. Somewhat reluctantly, the four denominations were replaced earlier than intended, but the remaining denominations stayed in use until 1947.

4d Mitre Peak. A better view than the 1898 version, this design shows Mitre Peak with a stylized “tea tree” (manuka) on the borders. The foliage that is present in the stamp obscures the bottom portion of the mountain where it plunges into the sound.

This and the other two denominations that portray mountains are the only bi-colored engraved stamps in the set.

15 PSNZ, p. 30.
5d Swordfish. Deep sea fishing has long attracted sports anglers to New Zealand. This stamp depicts a striped marlin, loosely termed a “swordfish.” The rock with the “tunnel” to the left is Piercy Island, near Cape Brett, famous for marlin and the mako shark.

6d Harvesting. The only stamp that was not designed by a New Zealander, it was submitted by an officer attached to the stamp printing office in Nasik, India. It shows harvesting of a cereal crop, similar to those found in the Plains of Canterbury. The issued stamp followed the submitted design quite closely.

8d Tuatara. A unique creature in many regards, the tuatara is a link between the lizard and the crocodile, and is the only living representative of some of the oldest creatures to inhabit the earth. Most unusual is that it has a third eye at the top of its head, roughly 0.02 inches in size, and mainly able to distinguish light from dark. They live very long and grow to a maximum of only about 18 inches long. The author’s photo taken in 2001 was at the special “tuatarium” in Invercargill. Maori carvings are found on the sides of the design.

9d Maori Panel. Since this includes solid colors, it was decided to print it by litho-offset process. Two plates were used; one for red and the other for black, with the white part of the design being provided by the paper, and the register sometimes did not match. The design is of a door, or tatau, and the colors are popular with the Maori. These designs varied with each individual artist.

Following the initial printing by Waterlow, all subsequent printings took place in New Zealand.

1/- Tui. After the originally selected design had been withdrawn as unsuitable for the small size of a stamp, L.C. Mitchell, who had designed four others in this series, was asked to make a line drawing of a design he had submitted of the tui, or parson bird. The bird has two tufts of feathers at its throat, similar to a parson’s distinctive neckwear, hence the name. It sings (unlike many New Zealand birds) and is a mimic, similar to the mynah bird.

2/- Captain Cook. A scene from New Zealand history, this stamp shows Captain James Cook’s landing of October 8, 1769, at Poverty Bay. He named the bay for the unwelcome reception by the natives and the resultant inability to obtain provisions. A cabbage tree is on the right and a tree-fern at the left.

The fourth stamp in the top row of the plate developed a small colored mark next to the second “o” of “Cook,” to read “Coqk,” inspiring many to pursue the “error.” It was never repaired, so all stamps from that plate have the variety.

3/- Mount Egmont. A snow-capped extinct volcano that is prominent in the Province of Taranaki, on the western side of the main body of the North Island, Mt. Egmont was named by Captain Cook for the Earl of Egmont, First Lord of the Admiralty. The Maori word for the mountain is Taranaki, and it figures prominently in native mythology. The shape of the mountain has often been compared to Japan’s Mt. Fuji.

Production Problems for the 1935 Pictorials

Paper and watermark problems with the initial printings resulted in development of a multiple NZ and star to replace the single version. Unfortunately, that was only the beginning of the problems with paper. Wartime shortages required changes in the quality of materials used for papers. Supplies of esparto grass from North Africa had been disrupted, so wood pulp paper was substituted, and
was called “Royal Cypher” grade. Perforations also created interesting varieties, even in the pre-war products. Various comb perfs were used for the three different sizes of stamps, including one that had a variable gauge from one long side to the other of each stamp, starting at 13 and ending at 14, with 13½ in the middle. When production ability was damaged by the Blitz on December 29, 1940, some work was given to other printing companies.

The dies and plates survived the attack, but some of the plates were turned over to Waterlow & Sons until De La Rue’s facilities could be repaired. Those were produced in distinctive shades and were perforated 12½ with a line machine. De La Rue continued to print the much-used 2d stamps, but had to ask both Waterlow and Harrison & Sons to help out with the perforating. The latter used a line perf 14 x 15, with the Waterlow product continuing to be perf 12½. An unknown quantity of the different perfs from each firm was lost when the *Norfolk* was torpedoed with 60,000 sheets of the 2d on board. Provisional use of the 1½d George VI stamps, overprinted 2d, eased the demand in New Zealand until the pictorial supplies could be restored.

**Images and Icons, as Part of New Zealand’s Identity**

The two experiments that resulted in the pictorial issues of 1898 and 1935 illustrate a continuing sense of identity and the ability to create a very attractive medium to promote the country’s many attributes. Most popular of these were mountains, of which nine different were identified and appear on ten different stamps, sometimes in combination, and in the case of Mt. Cook, three times as the primary subject of the design.

Lake and water scenery were popular, particularly with the 1898 issues. Most curious in regard to encouraging tourism was the inclusion of two scenes of terraces near Lake Rotomahana, which were both destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Tarawera. Similar, if less spectacular, terraces can be found in the hot springs area around Rotorua.

Creatures unique to New Zealand include five different birds, featuring the kiwi, but again including one that is extinct. The now-scarce tuatara can be found in off-shore islands, sharing burrows with birds, or in a zoo environment, since they are relatively slow moving and subject to predation by any of a number of sources.

Although the Maori were shown only once in the 1898 issue, as a war canoe that was a small portion of the 8d design, they were prominent in the 1935 issue. With one showing cooking in hot springs and the other a girl in profile, both were ground-breaking for New Zealand. Those were accompanied by a typical Maori house and a colorful panel of the sort seen inside the houses. Maori designs, many of which emulate the ubiquitous ferns found in the country, were incorporated in the borders of the designs on this issue.

Trees and flowers that are unique to the country were used to balance the design elements. Some of these, such as the cabbage tree, are sufficiently different from trees found elsewhere to lend an other-worldliness to the scenes. Many may be too small to identify, but the effect of their overall use is sufficient to show that they are different.

Only one shows a scene from history, with the landing of Captain Cook, while another shows a rather prosaic view of harvesting, which could be taken from almost anywhere. The deep-sea fishing view of a striped marlin could be from many other locations, but the view of Piercy Island, also known as “The Hole in the Rock,” in the background places the area in New Zealand, where the “hole” is 210 feet high.

**Success of the Issues**

The two issues shared a goal, but had different outcomes because of the period in which they occurred and the postal rates that applied at the time. The 1898 Pictorials were acknowledged to have been produced with similar thoughts to the U.S. Columbian issue as to the unusually high denominations that were included in the set. The larger format stamps were created for regular postage overseas (the 2½d and its double rate 5d), but were otherwise limited to three of the four
highest denominations, which had no realistic use for postage on letters. Rather, they were good for telegrams, packages and revenue use, but were targeted at collectors, who would tend to want to purchase the full set. The 5/- alone had an equivalent value of purchasing power of $30 today.

At the same time, the typical $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce letter from New Zealand was the UPU 3½d rate, equivalent to 5¢ in the United States. Registration was 3d, or 6¢, and multiple weight letters rarely required as much as a full shilling of postage. For this reason, covers with the 1898 Pictorial issue are not usually intended as a part of an exhibit, since they would use only the lower denominations and be very repetitive. Add to that the replacement of the two lowest values in 1901 by the green $\frac{1}{2}$d Mt. Cook and the 1d Universal and the pictorial issue became even less used for normal communications, defeating the stated premise of the issue.

The opposite was the case with the 1935 Pictorials. When they were introduced, New Zealand was still dependent on surface transportation of mail, but that changed rapidly with the introduction of airmail connections to the rest of the world. New airmail rates proliferated, and often required a combination of the available denominations to achieve the proper postage. In spite of this, it is difficult to find covers that do not have the correct rate other than the first day of issue and occasional philatelic creations. Rates varied considerably during the wartime years. Single use of a denomination was possible, but occasionally is very difficult to find.

The 3/- denomination represented a much smaller amount of purchasing power than the 5/- of 1898, and was often used as multiples, even to make up a single rate. As a result, the 1935 pictorials were commonly used in combination with a number of different stamps needed for a letter, achieving the desired aim of showing the beauty of the country and its attractions. Unfortunately, similar to the 1898 issues but for a different reason, the death of King George V and the desire to show King George VI removed four of the lower denominations from circulation, but only after a few years of their use.

Many of the subjects shown on these two issues have appeared again in recent years. The concept of the two competitions succeeded in a number of ways, each with a different result. The quality of printing was, in both cases, made far better by this change to line-engraved plates rather than the more economical surface printing that had been requested. This accident created two issues that have long-lasting appeal among collectors, and show the glories of the home country in outstanding form, made even more collectible by the vagaries of production that interfered with a constant production of the stamps.