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## Australian Record for Picture Postcards

Perhaps an Australian record was established for an unique series of 1905 football picture postcards, at the Charles Leski auction on Thursday night 13 December 2007. All were in fine condition and produced by Valentines, and were described as: "CARLTON: c1905 Valentines "League Series" postcard, very colourful and attractive G/VG". The series were all estimated at \$100 to \$120, with starting prices on the night ranging from \$240 to \$400. The exceptional cards were those of Essendon, Melbourne and South Melbourne. The set of eight in the series consists of:



Images courtesy Charles Leski website [www.leski.com.au](http://www.leski.com.au)

The auction was extremely well attended with several bidders having to stand and five phones fully active. When it came to lots #883 to #890 bidding became quite animated with the first lot going for \$1000 plus 16.5 buyer's commission. Competition was fierce with perhaps three determined bidders seeking these unique postcards, with individual prices realising from \$1600 to \$1750 per card [all plus commission]. The complete set was eventually acquired by an internationally renowned postcard aficionado who paid the princely sum of \$12,500 for these eight picture postcards, which makes them now worth \$1563 each – and yes, he could have sold them all within fifteen minutes at a profit!

Until the above auction the most expensive picture postcards had been two produced by the Tasmanian Government for the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition which were auctioned by Ross Ewington of Hobart in 2005 for \$700 each.

## A NEW CHUM IN POSTMARK COLLECTING.

Ronald. M. Lee.

Recently my wife and I travelled by car through NSW and Queensland for seven weeks. A friend, who collects postmarks, pointed out before we departed that this would be a great opportunity to obtain postmarks and photograph the post offices.

Before we had left Victoria, in a small town near Shepparton, I ventured into the first post office. Although my collector friend advised me that I did not need stamps on the envelope I decided that this was not reasonable. The P.O. was entitled to receive the small profit on the several 50 cent stamps I would need.

The young man behind the counter gladly sold me stamps, waited whilst I put them on envelopes and carefully cancelled them with the regular canceller. He then brought from under the counter a pictorial canceller which had not been used since the turn of the century because the date could not be moved beyond 1999. I bought more stamps and he happily cancelled my stamped envelopes even though the date was far from correct. I really enjoyed the friendly experience.

Later that day I was surprised when the lady postal officer in a large NSW town curtly refused my request as she had received instructions not to cancel any envelopes handed over the counter because people were selling postmarks and making money. Surely she had misunderstood the instruction because the P.O. everyday sells postage stamps to collectors and dealers who make money selling them. Today the P.O. produces many more stamps than are needed for postal purposes encouraging collectors to save them on the basis that they are a good investment.

Finally the lady relented and cancelled my two envelopes after selling me the stamps. As she cheerily said goodbye she added a word of warning that my activities were illegal.

I am not one to act illegally so what should I do? Deciding that there was something seriously wrong with her interpretation of the P.O instructions I decided to continue. Very soon I had visited 25 post offices and at each one the officer had gladly sold me stamps and cancelled my envelopes.

Then in a very small tourist town in central Queensland my request was again refused because it was illegal. Postal officials, I was told, are only permitted to cancel mail which is posted. When I explained that mail posted could obtain a second cancellation when it passed through the mail exchange which could deface the postmark I wanted for my collection she, too, relented. She was not very careful in cancelling the stamps and one strike was incomplete. She refused, however, my request for a second postmark on the envelope because that was outside the rules.

An hour or two later I visited the post office in another small tourist town just a few kilometres away and I received the same advice that it was illegal to cancel mail unless it was posted. This lady was very pleasant and pleased to chat. I asked her if I addressed the letters care of the post office could I then collect them? She laughed as she cancelled the envelopes for me "It is a matter of security you know. You could post this letter month later and I would be queried as to why the mail had taken so long"

As I had lunch that day I thought about her explanation. I can't post a letter with the stamp already cancelled. The stamp is cancelled to show it has completed its postal service. Ah, but things have changed. My local insurance agent sends her accounts out in first day covers with cancelled stamps, which she buys at a discount, so cancelled stamps are accepted. I know the world continually changes but I can't follow the logic of

this one.

Again I decided to continue to ask for samples of the postmark in the towns we visited. I was, however, a little concerned because the next town was a major regional centre and the P.O. there would surely know the rules. Here, again, I was pleasantly surprised. The young lady, one of several on duty at the very long counter, very pleasantly and efficiently sold me stamps and carefully cancelled the covers.

During our 9000K journey I collected postmarks from 120 post offices. Only on one other occasion did I have any difficulty. In an inner suburb of Brisbane the girl behind the counter I approached was learning the job and being coached by a supervisor standing behind. The supervisor immediately said the items could not be cancelled unless posted. When I pointed out that I had already collected postmarks from over 100 post offices and the reason why I did not want them to go through the post she said she would see what she could do. After disappearing into the backroom she produced two pre-stamped envelopes cancelled that day. The trainee was unaware that she had not followed the rules!

My experiences were generally most pleasant. One postmistress still had envelopes remaindered from an event that had taken place several years before. She found the special canceller, set the date back to the date of the event and gave them to me free of charge. On several occasions nervous clerks handed me the canceller so I could cancel the items myself. Another postal official, in a one man office, had just received advice that the P.O. would provide him with a pictorial canceller to promote his town if he would send in the details of his requirements. When he learnt that I had several pictorial postmarks with me he took photocopies. He had no idea what a pictorial canceller looked like. No doubt he was able to design something suitable.

On several occasions we were not aware we were in a P.O. until we saw the special counter. On a Saturday afternoon, in a tourist shop, we discovered the P.O. counter along side the sweets counter. I asked the girl if I left some stamped envelopes would she cancel them on Monday and send them to me. "I'll do it now" she said not at all concerned that it was after hours at the P.O.

After all this have I been acting illegally? I don't know but the reason cannot be that the P.O. wants to discourage postmark collecting because collectors make money from them, nor can it be that stamps must travel through the postal system to be cancelled. First day covers, are sold cancelled over the counter and do not travel via the postal service. I found it all very puzzling.



In this changing world finding the P.O. is not always easy. Photo of a P.O. in a northern NSW town. The only clue that it housed a post office was the post box.