

In This Issue

A new feature, this page will give a précis of the articles contained in this issue.

Roger Brody's article on the **Martha Washington stamp of 1902** shows the process behind selection of subjects for new stamps that existed at the turn of the century. In particular, he points out that besides a few allegorical figures on newspaper stamps and Queen Isabella on the Columbian issues, no specific American woman had appeared before on a U.S. stamp.

The first Thomas Ham printings of the **Half-Lengths of Victoria** took place before Victoria split away from New South Wales to become a separate colony. The Port Phillip District of New South Wales, named after the large natural harbor where Melbourne is located, was a separate postal administration, and chose to prepare its own stamps locally by lithography, using the name for the colony before it became official. The story **John Barwis** relates about the three denominations is as fascinating as the issues are rare.

Professor John Courtis is a regular contributor of articles to major publications, usually on the subject of postal stationery. The December 2004 issue of *The London Philatelist* has an article by him that describes an approach to evaluating rarity of some of these items. In this issue, he deals with the variations in the text instructions that were printed and revised on **newspaper wrappers**, particularly those used in British colonies, and the way to measure each of them and the indicia found on the wrappers to help to tell them apart.

The **Retta obliterators** found on Egypt's first three issues are fairly well known on the stamps and covers used within that country. A diamond-shaped grid, the retta is presumed to have received its name from the Italian *rete*, which means grid. The Italians were active in advising the early Egyptian post office. **Peter Smith** discusses the far more elusive examples that were used in the small offices abroad, why they were probably chosen for use, and why they are found more readily on the first and third issues, but not the second.

Kees Adema's article on the **cantinières in Napoleon's Grande Armée** offers an interesting view of a portion of the armies of the age that one seldom hears about. The cantinières performed valuable support functions that kept the large armies of the day supplied, both by cooking and mending clothes, and providing medical assistance and boosting morale during the heat of battle. They were gradually expected to provide medical care at the front and assist in collecting the dead and wounded. These women were authorized to participate where other camp-followers were not, and were issued badges of office.

The philatelic connection of these women is their connection to military mail. They sold letter paper with woodblock impressions that could be hand colored, usually in the regimental colors, which provides details about those uniforms that might not otherwise be known. Although they also assisted in writing letters for the illiterate, they did not have an official function in handling the mail.