



A Postal Tribute to Cattle Ranching

Nowhere is there a finer tribute to the cattle industry than depicted on stamps of the world. Postage stamps have portrayed the process of cattle raising from the birth of the calf to its transformation into meat, milk, butter,

hide and yes, even into the stamp itself for the very essence of the cow's body is contained in stamps—the glue which is made from the hoofs and horns of the cattle.

Stamp collecting is the most popular hobby in the world with 20 million

devotees in the United States alone. The total stamps issued is approaching 500,000 since England issued the first stamp back in 1840, and 6,000 more are released annually. Trying to corral even one nation's stamps becomes overwhelming and expensive.

As a result, the most popular branch of philately today is topical collecting in which one collects stamps limited to only one topic. In many cases, since many nations acknowledge their debt to the industrial sector, it is cattle; specifically, it can be just one specie such as Angus cattle.

Angus cattle were honored by the United States on a stamp in 1973-74 for the "Rural America" set of three farm stamps (No. 1). The Angus breed was chosen on the centenary of the introduction of Aberdeen-Angus cattle to the United States in 1873. In the background is a herd of admiring and lusty Longhorns.

Colombia in 1956 issued a five-cent stamp showing three young Angus beeves "dolloed up" for exhibition in a large set of industrial and agricultural stamps extolling the economic progress of the nation (No. 2).

Only two Angus stamps are represented in this display, but this is not

to say there are not more in the 4,000 pages of stamp catalogs. Nor that more won't be issued through the years to add to one's collection.

Angus and all cattle deserve to be honored on stamps since few animals have contributed so much to the progress of civilization.

Cattle-keeping began in the Stone Age when man first domesticated cattle (which probably began from the practice of keeping young pets caught when their mothers were killed for food), continued in northern Iraq circa 6500 B.C. and spread to Europe in 2500 B.C. Cattle became a necessary part of every human camp.

Indeed, man and cattle apparently evolved together, unlike the horse which was in evident stages of evolution for millions of years before man.

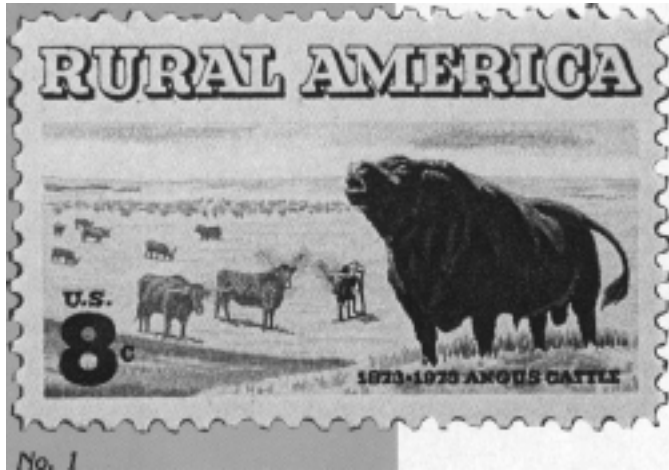
But you can find on stamps almost all the ancient breeds of cattle from the Andalusian of Spain, the Podolian of Russia, the Holstein of Holland, the Brahman of India, the Yak of Tibet, and the water buffalo of Africa.

Cattle stamps take you way back into antiquity. For example, Monaco issued a stamp in 1949 showing a reproduction of a prehistoric cave painting of the European bison (Top left, page 2).

You can find on stamps, the huge auroch, the wild cattle of early Europe during Pleistocene days which were prevalent during the Viking era and whose horns the Vikings used on their helmets. (It is believed that the last known wild auroch died in Poland in 1627.) This specie was first domesticated about 2,000 B.C. by the early Greeks.

All the fine and noteworthy sculpture of cattle in history have been reproduced on stamps. Egyptian statues of cowheaded goddesses, Mycenaean oxhead vases of Greece, the god Zeus in assumed form of a bull and others have been depicted—so venerated have been cattle in human history.

The fact that cattle were made the objects of religious worship is vividly displayed on stamps. As long ago as 14,000 B.C. in France and Spain the bison cult was practiced. This religion used the animal as a means of preventing the spirits of the dead from bothering the hairy caveman. Such a scene appears on the Monaco stamp. Armenia has issued cattle stamps portraying a winged bull as the god Enlil. Egypt has issued stamps showing Osiris, an agricultural god of Syrian origin who was buddies with a sacred goat. Later he

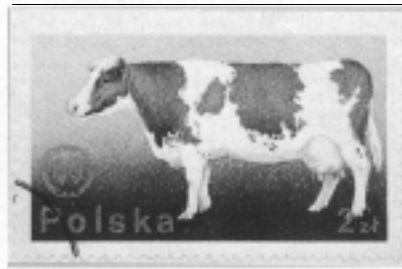


No. 1



No. 2

Raymond Schuessler
Venice, Florida



threw over the goat and took up with a bull. Somehow this made all the cows sacred.

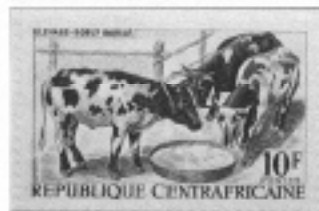
There are little known tidbits of history on cattle stamps; how many peoples have shown great affection for their bovine companions not only because of the fine roast beef and choice soups they provided, but for religious reasons? In India, Malaya, Greece, and Egypt, cattle were decorated and paraded and became partners in the festive celebration of the people. And in many parts of the world they are still so regarded. You can see how some emerging countries use odd cattle such as the water buffalo, yak, and antelope-like beasts which serve them as the American steer served us.



The lowly steer has had his head and entire body sometimes, included on coats of arms during knighthood days since the jousts did hunt wild bulls for sport and, of course, food. Countries which have issued stamps on cattle in heraldry are France, Romania, and Switzerland, plus a few other smaller principalities.

The proud and fierce Spanish Longhorns which were introduced to America through the West Indies shortly after Columbus, are amply portrayed on stamps especially those released by the Latin American countries and the United States.

Germany under Hitler in 1942 prepared a set of cattle stamps entitled, "Plowing rice field with teams of water buffalo" for India in preparation for their conquest and occupation of the country which, of course, never came to pass.



Many stamps display the cattle in working gear and properly so, since cattle have been much used at the yoke in all parts of the world. There may have been some interval between domestication and the time that a suitable harness was developed, but we know that even in the Stone Age oxen were dragging loads on sledges. Oxen used in the logging operations of Newfoundland are shown in that country's stamps as well as those that hauled covered wagons during the westward expansion in the States.

One might have a bit of trouble identifying some of the cattle on stamps but a little research in stamp periodicals or catalogs will determine the specie and often the story.

Here is a list of United States commemorative cattle stamps:

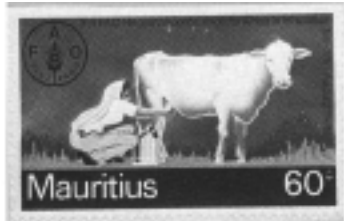
- In 1898, the Trans.-Mississippi "Omaha" stamp contained a one dollar stamp showing a famous drawing, "Cattle in a Storm" by J. MacWhirter.

- The 1912-13 issue has a 50-cent stamp showing cows grazing peacefully in a field titled "Dairying."

- In 1949, the Minnesota Territory Commemorative stamp was issued. The central design depicts a pioneer moving westward with a Red River ox cart pulled by the faithful beast of burden.

- In 1950, the California Statehood stamp portrayed a miner panning gold to the right of which is a pioneer man and woman standing behind a covered wagon drawn by the sturdy oxen.

- The Gadsden Purchase Commemorative stamp of 1953 shows a



pioneer group in an ox-drawn, covered wagon.

•Oxen seem to predominate on Western historical stamps revealing how great was man's dependence on this beast to conquer the West, before he turned to eating him.

•In 1954, the Kansas Territorial Commemorative stamp shows a field of wheat and a set of farm buildings in the foreground with a wagon train of pioneers in light silhouette forming the background with five oxen prominently displayed as the moving power of the caravan.

•The Nebraska Statehood Commemorative stamp of 1967 has an ear of yellow corn, with its green husk as a background against which the artist placed a reddish-brown Hereford.

Some stamps represent wild types of cattle mostly of the African and Asiatic countries but some, too, of Europe and North America. Some have never been domesticated by man but are a source of food and clothing to the natives in their particular stamping grounds. It might be a good idea to collect them on stamps since many of their species are being reduced in number and might one day become extinct as world's hunger rises. A typical stamp of such hunted cattle would be Togoland's "Dead buffalo on ground, killed by natives; a herd of antelope running off in background".

Aside from the cattle itself, stamps portray the by-products of cattle: milk, butter, cheese, they're all on stamps honoring and publicizing the health benefits of such versatile and nourishing food.

(Anyone interested in collecting a complete portfolio of the world's cattle stamps could probably still do so with only a modest expenditure, and keep on doing so by subscribing to a stamp periodical which would keep one posted on current cattle stamps being released around the world. Many ranchers have started such a stamp collection with their sons or grandsons building a satisfying mutual interest which can last through the years.)

All one needs to get started is a glance through a Standard Postage Stamp Catalog (Scott's) which lists all the world's known stamps and their current prices. Every library has one.

Some stamps do increase in value through the years and in some instances have made a good investment for future generations.

If a printing error is discovered on any stamp, you can be assured of a small fortune. In 1918, the United States printed one sheet of 100 stamps showing a Jenny airplane upside down. Today, one of those stamps sold for \$140,000! Should you discover an Angus cow printed upside down. . . .

