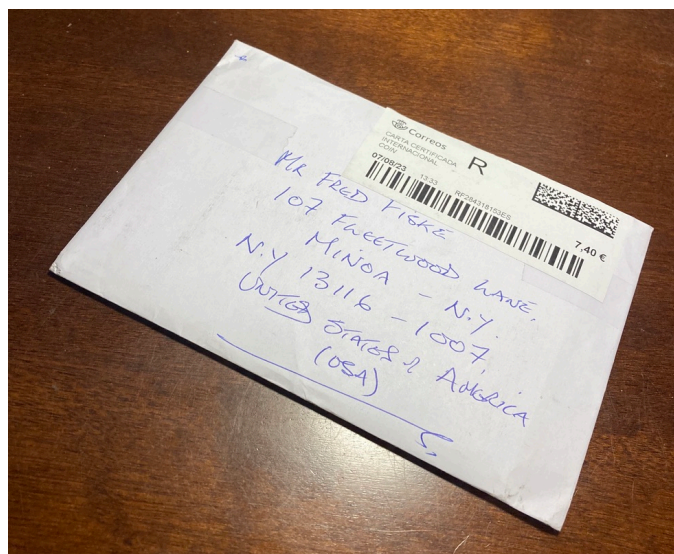


Bonus: Mail Order

The FMF Stamp Project is taking a breather after that romp of a tour through the postal history of British southern, central and eastern Africa. What's needed now is a light distraction before finishing up and embarking on new philatelic adventures. Here is a hinge-flavored palette cleanser between courses. Join me in the common yet always interesting and mildly exhilarating experience of receiving stamps by mail.



Just lifting an envelope like the one above is a treat for stamp collectors. You can pick it up, feel its heft, knowing that inside are nestled stamps you desire, safe in their cards, envelopes and packing. Each time a letter arrives, the small satisfaction of viewing and holding the envelope is the same. When all my current orders are in, I unpack and display the stamps for a while before adding them to my collection.

Here are my latest orders. Clockwise from top:

- A set from Belgium marking Congo independence in 1960.
- Postage due set from GB.
- Old British Guiana.
- Southwest Africa postage dues.
- Southwest Africa officials.
- More SWA officials.

See below for selected enlargements and commentary.





These stamps overprinted “S.W.A.: and “official” in English and Afrikaans were for government use in South West Africa, a territory administered by South Africa after World War I. It must have grated on some South West Africans to be using these bluntly overprinted stamps from South Africa, even displaying South Africa’s parliament building on the 2d stamp.

The next South West Africa set showed local scenes and images. It’s a striking series with its elegant engravings, bold hues and stimulating bi-color combinations. The country name now is spelled out — twice, in English and Afrikaans. “S.W.A.” certainly was simpler.



This self-congratulatory set from Belgium (left) caught my eye because it is such an artifact of colonial *hubris*. The Belgian Congo started out in the 1880s as a gigantic private fiefdom of Belgium’s King Leopold. It evolved into a profitable venture, looting the Congo’s resources and cruelly subjugating its people. Leopold eventually gave up his control, but Belgium’s subjugation, exploitation and extraction continued. In 1960, as Belgium had just begun to make amends for its brutality and suppression, the colonial rulers simply left. These stamps celebrate a nation woefully unprepared for self-rule, as the decades since independence have confirmed. Curiously, Belgium and the Congo also had the bilingual stamp challenge.

This colorful hodge lodge of old postage due stamps from South West Africa didn't cost much. It was fun to sprinkle them chronologically through my album pages. It's just fun to look at them sparkling in the adjoining picture. They look good enough to eat, like a handful of fruity candy crunches. What colors! What flavors! And hey, are the black numbers in the middle licorice flavored?



Just a word or two about this mixed group at left. The British Guiana stamps from 1897 must have been quite a sensation at the time with the bi-color production and delicate designs. I jumped at the chance to fill out my set with these two missing values, which are surcharged "TWO CENTS." The yellow stamp below is more typical of staid 19th century philately. It's part of a set from St. Lucia issued in 1864. The formal cameo profile of Queen Victoria may be dull, but the color pops!



Look back at the overall picture to spot the complete set of contemporary postage due stamps from Great Britain. Only after receiving the stamps and examining them did I notice that one of them (above left) was damaged. Can you spot the flaw? The other picture shows the stamp turned over, and it looks like a small mouse took a bite out of it. The high-value cancelled stamp might be worth a buck or two, but not in this condition. Oh well. By the way, you remember why there's no country name on GB stamps, don't you?

THE FMF STAMP PROJECT CONTINUES

