

**REINHEIMER, A.**  
***The first postage stamp exhibition***  
***[Die erste postwerthzeichen-austellung]***  
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**THE FIRST POSTAGE STAMP EXHIBITION**

Only a few words are necessary as an explanation of the picture: "Un coin de l'Exposition Vandermaelen à Bruxelles en 1852"

The great exhibition in London this year seemed to give me the opportunity to establish one fact which is important for the history of Philately, namely that already in 1852 in Brussels, a public show of stamps as a subject for collecting had taken place.

As a boy I had seen the frame, freely reproduced from memory, in which this (probably the very first) stamp collection was displayed and that awakened in my brother and me the biggest interest so that we at that time came back to this subject again and again in our conversation and decided to also start a stamp collection. No sooner said than it was done. In 1862 this collection consisted of almost 1000 pieces and was put into an album specifically ordered for this. Each stamp was mounted in a loose relief frame and each page had a gold-edge, accompanied by the crests of the countries. The names of the countries were done in water color with ornaments, flowers, figurines, etc.

This album of 1862, with the number of the year gold-embossed on the cover, must be unique. I still have it today.

In 1863 J.-B. Moens wrote in the first year of his *Timbre-Poste* (page 29) some enthusiastic words about the Vandermaelen Exposition, where nothing fascinated him as much as the 100-150 stamps at the show.

In April of the same year Moens reassured me that he had seen the stamps at Vandermaelen in 1852.

Furthermore, I received a card from a book dealer Demenlenaere in Brussels who, with certainty, remembered admiring the sets of stamps at this show.

Because I was also successful finding in the still well known paper *L'Indépendance Belge* under the date of 24<sup>th</sup> September 1852, a note which refers to a visit by King Leopold I and his sons to the museum Vandermaelen, this date can now be officially, in the history of philately, considered as the first public appearance of stamps as an object of collection and to verify that it was, as said before, the real reason for my participation in the London Exhibition.

Naturally it is not impossible that there was somebody before Philipp Vandermaelen as a stamp collector: Because he, as a geographer, belongs among the famous Belgians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it can well be presumed that because he traveled worldwide, he may have had the thought to include the stamps he saw and used among the ethnological, mineralogical and other exotic pieces.

The fact that the Earl of Crawford in his speech, by recommendation of the Prince of Wales, mentioned my picture as historically interesting at the opening of the show in London, shows satisfactorily that England not only thought of the financial side, but also stimulated interest in all philatelic questions, and that is more than just encouraging.

A Reinheimer

Note: The original that was shown in London now has a prominent place in the famous library of the English philatelist, the Earl of Crawford.

**END**