



Guyana

Status: Republic in northeastern South America

Area: 82,895 sq. miles

Population: 735,000 (2015 est.)

Currency: GY \$203 = U.S. \$1



1-cent black from 1866, Scott 50. The ship design was used on more than three dozen stamps from 1860 to 1876.



A 2-cent overprint on 24-cent green from 1881, Scott 101.



A 1-cent black on lilac rose with diagonal perforations from 1882, Scott 103.



3-cent carmine from 1934, Scott 212.

The Guianas were sighted by Columbus on his third voyage. Like so much of the vast new Spanish claims, they were not explored. That was left to adventurers seeking the elusive El Dorado and more practical British, French, and Dutch merchants.

By the middle of the 17th century it was only the Dutch, with successful agricultural settlements on the Essequibo, Berbice — and later the Demerara — rivers, who challenged Spanish claims to the region. When the Netherlands became embroiled in the wars of the French revolution, the British considered it to be “occupied territory” and attacked the Dutch holdings in Guiana more or less continuously from 1796 to 1814. After Napoleon’s defeat, the British retained control.

In 1831, the British merged three former Dutch colonies into the colony of British Guiana. The economic potential of Guiana the British anticipated was never fully achieved. The abolition of slavery in 1838 added to the labor shortage. Importation of indentured East Indian workers helped but the colony never enjoyed more than modest economic success. During the 20th century, labor unrest and ethnic tensions brought gradual political liberalization and a broadening of suffrage.

British Guiana was granted internal autonomy in 1951, though it was rescinded in 1953 because of the Marxist policies of Cheddi Jagan, the country’s leading politician. After Jagan’s ouster, British Guiana became independent in 1966 as Guyana. Political corruption hampered national development. It was not until 1992 that Guyana enjoyed what is generally considered to be its first free elections.

British Guiana’s postal services date from the British occupation at the end of the 18th century. As a British colony, the British GPO had responsibility for external mail. The GPO opened post offices in Georgetown and New Amsterdam. After May 11, 1858, the GPO used British postage stamps for external mail.

Inland mail was a local responsibility. For that purpose, stamps were produced by the local newspaper, the *Royal Gazette*, in Georgetown. The first examples, the cottonreels, were placed on sale on July 1, 1850. After 1853, the postage stamps of British Guiana, apart from some emergency local printings, were lithographed by Waterlow & Sons in London. The Waterlow issues depicted a sailing ship, the seal of the colony. The 1856 emergency issues, also produced in the newspaper offices, represent some of the most valuable philatelic rarities, including the One-Cent Magenta, “the world’s most valuable stamp.” After 1860, Guiana assumed responsibility for all postal services in the colony.

In 1876, at the urging of the Crown Agents, the contract for production of postage stamps was moved to Thomas De La Rue & Co.

The British Monarch was not depicted on British Guiana’s stamps until the era of George V. With independence, stamps were inscribed “Guyana.”



In 1981, Guyana overprinted postage due stamps to be used as postage stamps, Scott 349.



1-cent green King George VI, Scott 230.



A Boy Scouts overprint from 1989, Scott 2037.



An overprint — “Essequibo is Ours” — was applied to Scott 281. This overprint is without serifs, Scott 391a.



A WWI British Guiana War Tax stamp, Scott MR1.