



Trinidad and Tobago

Status: Republic in southern Caribbean
Area: 1,980 sq. miles
Population: 1,222,363 (2015 est.)
Currency: 100 cents = 1 TT Dollar. US\$1 = TT\$6.40 (2015)



Tobago had its own stamps from 1879 to 1896. This overprint of an 1880 stamp was issued in 1883, Scott 13.



The first official stamps for Trinidad were issued in 1851. The 1-penny blue, Scott 3.



Tobago's Scarborough post office on this stamp issued as part of the 1983 World Communications set, Scott 384.



A 1915 semipostal meant to raise money for the Red Cross, Scott B2.

Both the islands of Trinidad and Tobago just off the coast of Venezuela were discovered by Columbus in 1498 on his third voyage. Trinidad, the larger of the two and most populated today, served principally as a source of Arawak slaves. Attempts at settlement in 1532–34 and 1569 failed. The first permanent settlement was established in 1592 by Antonio de Berrio, who planned to use it as a base for his search for the fabled El Dorado, which, at different times was fabled to be a gold-laden king, city, or kingdom. The Spanish government considered the colony unauthorized but did not have the resources to evict the settlers. The colony remained largely neglected by the Spanish. For 20 years no Spanish ship called at the colony.

Tobago was claimed in 1580 by the British and in 1581, King Charles presented the island to his godson, the Duke of Courland (in modern Latvia). A few Latvians arrived later that year but their settlement was under constant attack from the Caribs and in 1658, it was conquered by the Dutch. The island changed hands 31 times as the French, English, and Dutch fought over it. The British prevailed in 1814. There was a period of prosperity driven by sugar production. The island became a crown colony in 1877. The island's fortunes declined after the abolition of slavery and in 1889, the British merged Tobago with Trinidad.

Trinidad and Tobago was ruled as a crown colony until 1925, when it gained self-government.

The franchise was expanded in steps until 1946, which was the first election with universal adult suffrage. On August 31, 1962, it gained

full independence within the Commonwealth. In 1976, it became a republic. Oil was discovered in Trinidad and by the early 20th century, the island had become a major oil producer. Today, Trinidad and Tobago has one of the highest per capita income in the Americas.

The postal system in Trinidad was developed by the British. A postmaster general for Trinidad was appointed in 1800. Various handstruck markings are known from 1804 until 1851. In 1847, the owner of SS *Lady McLeod* sold a stamp to prepay the carriage of letters on his 67-ton paddle steamer between Port of Spain and San Fernando.

These "Lady McLeod" locals are among philately's most famous rarities. On August 14, 1851 an inland post was established with post offices in Port of Spain and San Fernando. A 1-penny stamp depicting Britannia was placed on sale on that date.

Tobago's post developed separately. A cover to London is known from 1772. A handful of the early pre-stamp covers exist, mostly from soldiers back to Great Britain. The British GPO established a branch post office at Scarborough in 1841. Stamps were made compulsory on April 1, 1858. British stamps were used from 1858 to March 1860 when the post was handed over to the local government. Handstamps were again used in Tobago until 1879, when the Crown Agents appointed De La Rue to produce stamps for the colony. In 1913, the government introduced postage stamps inscribed "Trinidad & Tobago."



Queen Victoria typically appears on many early stamps of British colonies. Trinidad, Scott 57.



Queen Elizabeth and Queen's Park, Savannah, 1963, Scott 78.



A set of four 1999 stamps honor Miss Universe, Wendy Fitzwilliam, Scott 595.