

MY, MY.



The Wonderland



Postage-Stamp Case

ALICE
IN
WONDERLAND

Note: Image on movie poster on page 9 from T.M. Burton/Walt Disney Productions, Inc.



Figure 1.

Patricia A. Kaufmann



Lewis Carroll's “Wonderland” Postage-Stamp-Case

Alice’s tumble down a rabbit hole and her consequent adventures in Wonderland have captivated readers, both young and old, since it first appeared in 1865. This fanciful fantasy has been translated into as many as 175 languages. Johnny Depp reigned supreme as the Mad Hatter in 2010 in the Disney Studios film triumph, *Alice in Wonderland*, which generated over \$1 billion in ticket sales. The Tim Burton sequel, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, was released in May of 2016.

Last year marked the 150th anniversary of one of the world’s best-known children’s books, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, the pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. A first American edition book cover (1866) is shown in Figure 1.



Figures 2-5.

Britain's Royal Mail commemorated the anniversary with a set of ten stamps on January 6, 2015, shown in Figures 2-5. The British Library displayed an *Alice in Wonderland* exhibit that ran into April of 2016. On display was the original manuscript for *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (see sidebar), the handwritten document on which "Wonderland" was based.

Among the Carrolliana on display at the British Library was one item of particular interest to the philatelic community, "The 'Wonderland' Postage-Stamp-Case," invented by Lewis Carroll. Figure 6 shows the envelope in which the stamp holder, outer case and booklet came. The cover of the envelope briefly explains the holder, case and booklet within—*Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter-Writing*, by Lewis Carroll. (Figure 7)

This charming set is a stamp collector's delight. It combines the best of a beloved author's work with our philatelic world. You may wonder how I—mainly known as a student of Civil War postal history—came to study this stamp case. The revelation is that I am also a collector of stamp boxes, stamp cases and small related desk objects. This is one of the "must-haves" for such a collection. The Wonderland Stamp Case and companion pieces are so much more than objet d'art to display on a shelf.

The "Wonderland" Postage Stamp Case

Lewis Carroll wrote:

"Necessity is the mother of invention"; and it was the constant worry of never having ready to hand, when one wanted it, a postage stamp of the right value for a letter or parcel, which drove me to invent my 'Won-



THE "WONDERLAND"
POSTAGE-STAMP-CASE.

Invented by LEWIS CARROLL.

This Case contains 12 separate pockets for Stamps of different values, and 2 Coloured Pictorial Surprises taken from "Alice in Wonderland." It is accompanied with the Booklet 8 or 9 Wise Words about Letter-Writing, by Lewis Carroll.

Published by Messrs. EMBERLIN AND SON,
4, Magdalen Street, Oxford.

Price 1s.

N.B.—If ordered by Post, an additional payment will be required, as per annexed Table, to cover cost of postage :—

One to four copies	1d.
Eight copies	2d.
Fifteen do.	3d.
Every subsequent fifteen do.			1½d.

Above: Johnny Depp reigned supreme as the Mad Hatter in 2010's Disney Studios film triumph, *Alice in Wonderland*. It is available now on Blu-Ray DVD.

Figure 6.

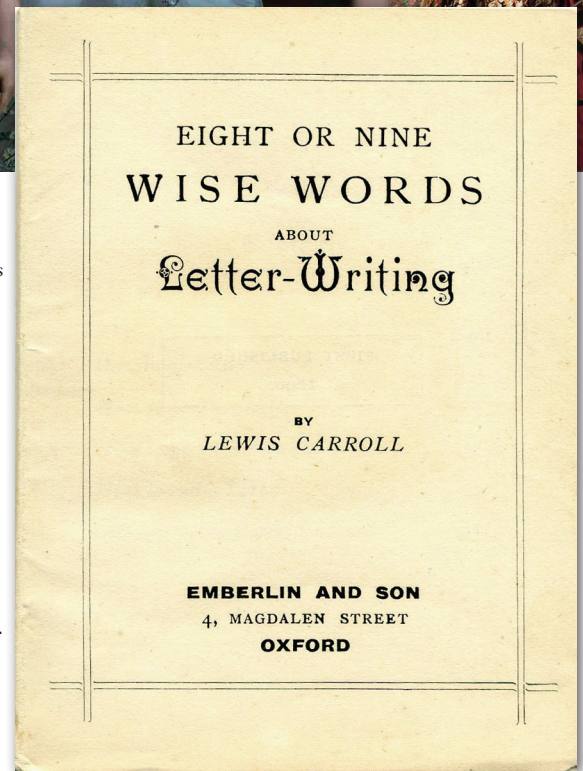


Figure 7.

derland Postage-Stamp Case', which contains twelve pockets, marked for stamps of various values and two coloured Pictorial Surprises from 'Alice in Wonderland'. It is accompanied with a small book *Eight or Nine Wise Words About Letter Writing*." (Figure 7)

The Wonderland Stamp Case was invented precisely on October 29, 1888, according to the diaries of Lewis Carroll.¹ However, he ran into difficulties finding someone to produce it and thus it did not go on sale until July 2, 1890. The *Wise Words* booklet followed at that time to accompany it.²

With the timing of "The 'Wonderland' Postage Stamp Case" and *The Nursery Alice*, both released in 1890, there is not much doubt that Carroll was using the former as a vehicle to promote his new book for younger children.

The stamp case itself is in two parts, a stamp holder and an outer case. The holder is formed of two sheets of paper sewn together, which contains twelve stamp-size pockets, the inside sheet with crescent-shaped cuts. There are horizontal lines of stitching between each row. The holder is folded down the center so that there are six pockets on each side. Figure 8 shows the holder empty while Figure 9 shows one filled with stamps in denominations corresponding to the designated openings.

The outer case is made of linen-backed paper with a picture on the front cover of Alice holding the Duchess's Baby, who is bawling frightfully. (Figure 10) When the holder is slid out of the outer case, the baby has turned into a Pig. (Figure 11)

On turning over the outer case, the Cheshire Cat is pictured on the back cover. (Figure 12) On withdrawing the stamp holder from the case,



Note: Image above from T.M. Burton/Walt Disney Productions, Inc.

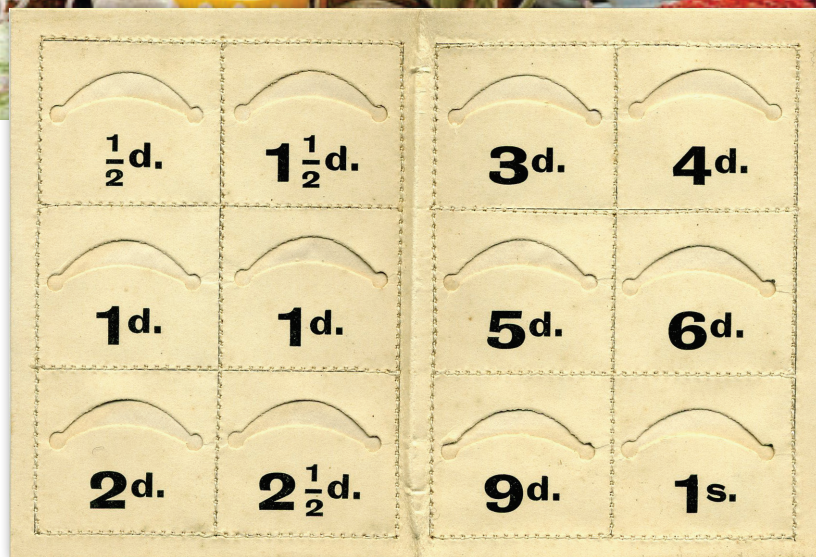


Figure 8.



Figure 9.

only the Cat's grin can be seen. It seems that Carroll, a master of trickery in fiction, was also a maker of paper effects. (Figure 13)

The apparent quick changes were what Lewis Carroll called his "Two Coloured Pictorial Surprises." Bland as this may seem to us in today's world, it was in character with the inventor's whimsical personality. Alice holding the baby may be new to some; the other three illustrations appear in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The Duchess's Baby appeared in *The Nursery Alice*, rewritten by Carroll, shortened and simplified without the puns and irony of the original, for children "from nought to five; it was published in 1890, 25 years after the original Alice."³ (Figure 14)

Carroll obviously enjoyed everything about his stamp case and wrote about it:

"Some American writer has said 'the snakes in this district may be divided into one species—the venomous.' The same principle applies here. Postage-Stamp-Cases may be divided into one species, the 'Wonderland'. Imitations of it will soon appear, no doubt: but they cannot include the two Pictorial Surprises, which are copyright.

"You don't see why I call them 'Surprises'? Well, take the Case in your left-hand, and regard it attentively. You see Alice nursing the Duchess's Baby? (An entirely new combination, by the way: It doesn't occur in the

book.) Now, with your right thumb and forefinger, lay hold of the little book, and suddenly pull it out. *The Baby has turned into a Pig!* If that doesn't surprise you, why, I suppose you wouldn't be surprised if your own Mother-in-law suddenly turned into a Gyroscope!"

Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter-Writing

Particularly as philatelists, we are grateful that Carroll wrote and received what is estimated to be around 100,000 letters in his lifetime. With this set, he left us instructions as to how best write our own letters. He shares with the reader his thoughts and opinions on how to begin, continue with and end a letter. And, of course, it is anything but boring. It is both entertaining and engaging, while at the same time providing sound advice.

With the exception of Lewis Carroll's first directive to write legibly, the balance of instructions in his *Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter-Writing* are as relevant today as then, even for modern electronic communication. For example, his point number six, which surely applies to email:

"6) **Humor is hard to translate to writing. Be obvious**—'If it should ever occur to you to write, jestingly, in dispraise of your friend, be sure you exaggerate enough to make the jesting obvious: a word spoken in



Figure 10.



Figure 11.

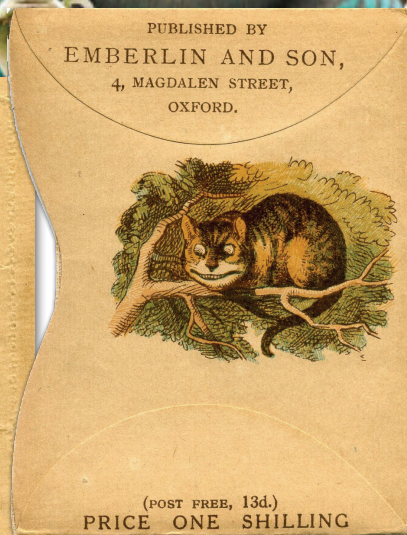


Figure 12.

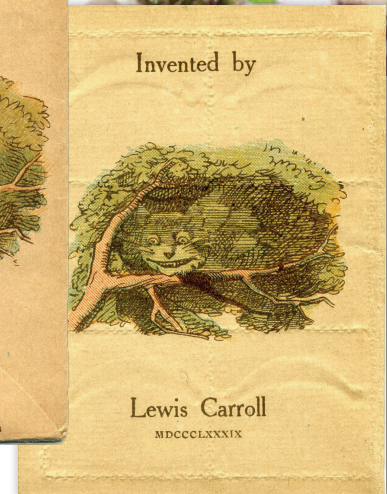


Figure 13

jest, but taken as earnest, may lead to very serious consequences. I have known it to lead to the breaking-off of a friendship. Suppose, for instance, you wish to remind your friend of a sovereign you have lent him, which he has forgotten to repay—you might quite mean the words “I mention it, as you seem to have a conveniently bad memory for debts’, in jest: yet there would be nothing to wonder at if he took offence at that way of putting it. But, suppose you wrote ‘Long observation of your career, as a pickpocket and a burglar, has convinced me that my one lingering hope, for recovering that sovereign I lent you, is to say ‘Pay up, or I’ll summons yer!’ he would indeed be a matter-of-fact friend if he took that as seriously meant!”

Different Editions

Over the years, various collectors in England began to notice differences when they compared with each other their precious copies of the Wonderland Stamp Case and its parts. In 1980, Gerald Davis wrote a detailed article in *Stamp Collecting*⁴ in which he assigned type numbers to the stamp holder, the outer case, the booklet, and the envelope. He explained the differences in great detail, including measurements, design differences, dates of production, and how to tell one from another. After carefully comparing sets with those of other collectors, Davis assigned

three types to the stamp holder, five to the outer case, eight to the booklet, and three to the envelope. Reprints of the original set were issued sometime circa 1910.

Closing Thoughts

Carroll’s work has timeless appeal. His imaginative world of nonsense verse entralls us today as much as it did young Alice Liddell. Who can forget a world populated by characters such as the Mad Hatter, Queen of Hearts, Cheshire Cat, and White Rabbit? To think that all of this evolved from that celebrated “Golden Afternoon” when the Reverend Dodgson took the three little Liddell girls on an unforgettable boating trip.

Carroll, although not a stamp collector, understood the culture of letter writing and correspondence transmission as so much more than just a method of communicating information. He knew it could also be a way of displaying the creativity that we specifically treasure as collectors and postal historians.

In 1891, Carroll met with Alice Liddell Hargreaves—her married name—and presented her with a stamp case, which he inscribed: “Mrs. Hargreaves, from the Inventor, Dec. 9, 1891.” That was the last time that the original Alice’s name appeared in Carroll’s diaries.⁵

Charles Lutwidge Do and the Evolution of

Certainly the most famous Alice is her character in the Walt Disney cartoon motion picture of Lewis Carroll's tale.



Figure E. John Tenniel's illustration of the White Rabbit from *The Nursery Alice* (1890).

THROUGH *the*
LOOKING-GLASS
AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE



Figure A. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), better known as Lewis Carroll. 1863.



Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There. Lewis Carroll (1832-1898). John Tenniel (1820-1914), Illustrator. Gilbert H. McKibbin, Manhattan Press, New York, 1899

dgson

Alice

Sidebar by
Patricia A. Kaufmann

Figure C. Alice Liddell (right) with her sisters Lorena and Edith circa 1859, photo by Lewis Carroll.



Figure B. Alice Liddell at six years old, dressed up as a beggar maid, the inspiration for Carroll's most famous book, as photographed by him in 1858.



Figure D. Alice Liddell and ferns, July 1860; published as a miniature on the last page of the original *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898)—better known as Lewis Carroll—was a prolific writer, mathematician, logician, Anglican deacon and photographer. He was born in the village of Daresbury, England, the eldest boy in a family of eleven children. Dodgson's family was predominantly northern English, with Irish connections, conservative and Anglican. Most of Dodgson's male ancestors were army officers or Church of England clergy. His great-grandfather, also named Charles Dodgson, had risen through the ranks of the church to become the Bishop of Elphin. Dodgson was mathematically gifted and awarded a scholarship to Christ College, Oxford (Oxford University), which could have led to a brilliant academic career. Following the family tradition, became a deacon of the church in 1861. He was a life-long bachelor.⁶ Figure A.

Dodgson suffered from a bad stammer, but was comfortable when speaking with children. The relationships he had with young people in his adult years undoubtedly inspired his best-known writings. Dodgson loved to entertain children, and it was Alice, the daughter of Henry George Liddell (head of Christ Church, Oxford), who can be credited as his crowning inspiration. Alice Liddell, shown in Figures B and C, remembers spending many hours with Dodgson, sitting on his couch while he told fantastic tales of dream worlds.⁷

During an 1862 Sunday afternoon boat outing and picnic with Alice and her two sisters—July 4th, to be precise—Dodgson told the first version of what would later become *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. With a friend, Reverend Canon Duckworth, they rowed the boat on the river Isis—the local name for the stretch of the Thames that flows through Oxford.⁸ (Figure D)

This is how Duckworth described the trip afterwards:

"I rowed stroke and he rowed bow (the three little girls sat in the stern)...and the story was actually composed over my shoulder for the benefit of Alice Liddell, who was acting as 'cox' of our gig...I remember turning round and saying,

'Dodgson, is this an extempore romance of yours?' And he replied, 'Yes, I'm inventing it as we go along.'"

When Alice arrived home, she exclaimed that he must write the story down for her. Dodgson made an initial outline the next day, during a train journey. Per the British Library, *"It took him some time to write out the tale - in a tiny, neat hand - and complete the 37 illustrations. Alice finally received the 90-page book, dedicated to 'a dear child, in memory of a summer day', in November 1864."*⁹ This first version was the manuscript for *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*. Thus was inspired what became arguably the world's most famous children's book.¹⁰

Dodgson was urged by friends to publish his work. He rewrote and enlarged it, removing some of the private family references and adding two new chapters. The book was printed by Macmillan on July 4, 1865, exactly three years after the famous boat trip.

The published version was illustrated by the artist John Tenniel, who in 1893 was knighted by Queen Victoria for his artistic achievements. He was the principal political cartoonist for Britain's *Punch* magazine for more than fifty years, as well as the person who visually brought to life the delightful characters in Carroll's work.¹¹ Figure E.

In 1928, Alice was forced by want of money to sell her treasured manuscript at auction—Sotheby's lot #319. It was bought by a the renowned rare book dealer, Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach, for £15,200 (then equivalent to \$77,000); it was almost immediately resold to Eldridge Johnson for "cost plus ten." In 1946, the manuscript was sold by Johnson's heirs at a Parke-Bernet auction. Again, it was knocked down to Rosenbach, but this time for \$50,000.¹² A campaign was initiated to raise the money to purchase the book for the Library of Congress who would, then, donate it to the British Museum as an expression of international good will in appreciation of the British people's role in the Second World War. This succeeded and the manuscript was returned to England, where it may now be seen.¹³



Lewis Carroll with the children of his friend the author George MacDonald, 1860s—near the time of his authorship of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.



Endnotes:

¹Roger Lancelyn Green, Editor, *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, Vol. II, 1867-98, Cassell & Co., Ltd., 1953.

²Paul Albright, "Carroll's stamp case joins Alice anniversary celebration," *Linn's Stamp News*, April 5, 2016.

³Nursey Alice pictures, <http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/resources/pictures/nursery-alice/> Accessed July 23, 2016.

⁴Gerald Davis, "The Wonderful Case of Alice," *Stamp Collecting*, June 12, 1980.

⁵Ibid. Albright.

⁶Roger Lancelyn Green, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Lewis Carroll, British Author. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lewis-Carroll> Accessed July 20, 2016.

⁷Wikipedia, Alice Liddell. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AliceLiddell/> Accessed July 22, 2016.

⁸About the book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. <http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/resources/background/alicess-adventures-in-wonderland/> Accessed July 23, 2016

⁹Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, Online Gallery, British Library. <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/alice/accessible/introduction.html/> Accessed July 22, 2016.

¹⁰Bio. *Lewis Carroll Biography*. <http://www.biography.com/people/lewis-carroll-9239598/> Accessed July 20, 2016.

¹¹Wikipedia, John Tenniel, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Tenniel/ Accessed July 23, 2016.

¹²Ibid. About the book.

¹³Ibid. British Library.

