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Blue Mauritius: The Hunt for the World's Most Valuable Stamps

Helen Morgan

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Follow the adventures of the world's most sought-after postage stamps—from a tropical Indian Ocean island to the hushed atmosphere of the modern auction room—in this dramatic and passionate tale of the first stamp hunters. In September 1847 colored squares of paper were stuck on to envelopes and used to send out admission cards to a fancy-dress ball on the tropical island of Mauritius. No one at the party would have guessed that these stamps would one day be worth more than a million dollars. When a two-pence "Blue Mauritius" surfaced on the fledgling French stamp-collecting market in 1865 it gained instant celebrity. Soldiers, schoolboys, and the entire German nation became obsessed with finding one of these extremely rare examples. When in 1903 a perfect specimen, discovered in a childhood album, was bought at auction by the Prince of Wales, the Blue Mauritius gained superstar status. Even now, "Post Office Mauritius" stamps are synonymous with fame, wealth, and mystery. The most coveted scraps of paper in existence, this is their story—from their birth during days of sail, taking them from Port Louis to Bordeaux, India and Great Britain, Switzerland and Japan, into the hearts and imagination of collectors everywhere.

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