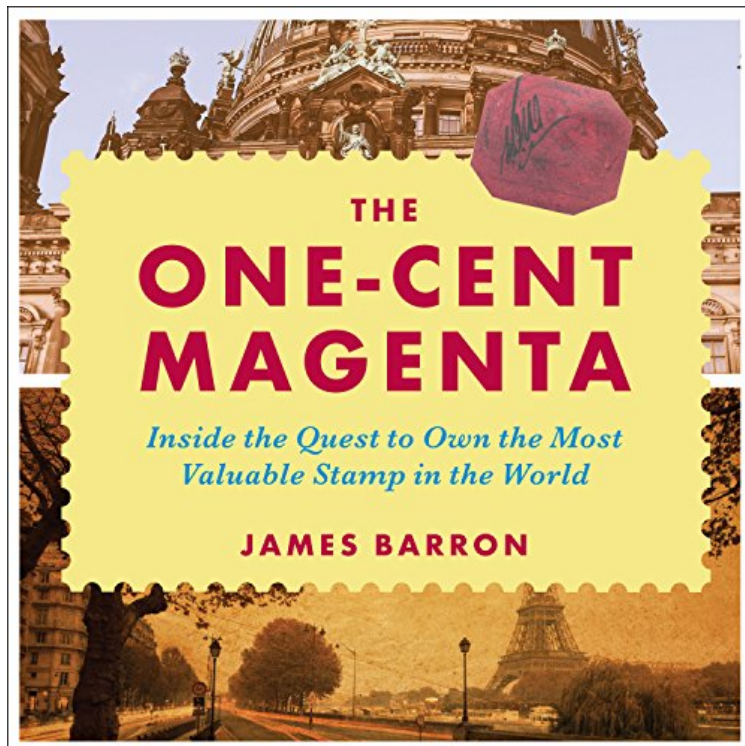


#3241075 in Books 2017-03-07 2017-03-07 Formats: Audiobook, CD, Unabridged Original  
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*James Barron*

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## **The One-Cent Magenta: Inside the Quest to Own the Most Valuable Stamp in the World**

**James Barron : The One-Cent Magenta: Inside the Quest to Own the Most Valuable Stamp in the World**  
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The One-Cent Magenta: Inside the Quest to Own the Most Valuable Stamp in the World*:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Beyond philately, an absorbing book illuminating all our obsessions with collecting. By LEBH's latest, "The One-Cent Magenta: Inside the Quest to Own the Most Valuable Stamp in the World" ---like James Barron's previous book "Piano: the Making of a Steinway Grand"--- reads like a non-fiction drama. While reviewing world events and technology impacts over the past two centuries, the reader follows the erratic meanderings of one small piece of paper, blown through world events and technology development like a will-of-the-wisp leaf, blown from location to location, sometimes hidden, sometimes lost, sometimes in danger of deterioration or even destruction. Impeccably researched, the book covers the development of philately, and vividly describes the various individuals whose lives intersect with the stamp's passage from its printing to current location. The book is replete with beautiful turns of phrase, complementing exemplary, faultless prose. "Ann was the daughter of a harness maker who went to work in a textile mill---not Hind's---as the horse-and-buggy days disappeared in rear-view mirrors." And, "a book about a stamp, the part that another book about another stamp described as "philatelic fact, which are usually dry." But nothing like a good martini." In an Internet age, we learn how the term emerged and

about the collection obsession that attends philately ("... there was something about philately--the near obsessive joy of inquiring about obscure stamps and acquiring them"), how the advent of steam ships speeded the transmission of information and news across the oceans in the mid-1800's, coupled with the plethora of newspapers in Great Britain and the United States disseminating that information, albeit at a much slower speed than now. As we follow the history of the one-cent magenta, Barron treats us to a treasure trove of relevant information (including 29 pages of "Notes"): how the British postal system evolved to its modern state (e.g., distance-free, flat-rate charge, paid by the sender), and resulting impact on U.S.P.S., how the postage stamp came to be, and an engaging story that illuminates collecting at a general level: "... about what makes something collectible, valuable, and enduring." And we come to understand the obsession of the various owners, including Weitzman the current owner with the one-cent magenta: "He did not care about the paper it was printed on, the celebrity factor that came with it, or the money that he spent to get it. What he wanted was the thing that no one else could have." James Barron's "The One-Cent Magenta" is an odyssey twice over: Barron travels extensively, an odyssey of discovery, tracing the history of the magenta; his odyssey of discovery is about a prior odyssey, the travels and travails of this unique stamp. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. What a delightful read! This book will appeal to ... By Customer What a delightful read! This book will appeal to both philatelists and casual readers of detective novels, travelogues, history -- and eccentric behavior. The style is smooth and gripping, as one would expect from a veteran journalist. To borrow an expression from the world of collectors, this book is one-of-a-kind. Carroll Brown 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A pure delight, even if you aren't a philatelist! By Marie T From the very first chapter, I was enthralled, delighted and entertained. And I don't even collect stamps. The characters are vivid and colorful. From the owner who found it and sold it for next to nothing to the glamor this small piece of paper enjoys today. The history tour with the stamp is engaging and well-researched. I love the writing style. The author had with the topic and it shows. A wonderful read that I can't recommend enough.

When it was issued in 1856, it cost a penny. In 2014, this tiny square of faded red paper sold at Sotheby's for nearly \$10 million, the largest amount ever paid for a postage stamp at auction. Through the stories of the eccentric characters who have bought, owned, and sold the One-Cent Magenta in the years in between, James Barron delivers a fascinating tale of global history and immense wealth, and of the human desire to collect. One-cent magentas were provisional stamps, printed quickly when a shipment of official stamps from London did not arrive in British Guiana. They were mostly thrown out with the newspapers; one stamp survived. The singular One-Cent Magenta has had nine owners since a twelve-year-old boy rediscovered it in 1873. He soon sold it for what would be \$17 today. Among later owners was a wealthy French nobleman who hid the stamp from almost everyone; a businessman who traveled with the stamp in a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist; and John E. du Pont, who died while serving a thirty-year sentence for the murder of Olympic wrestler Dave Schultz. The One-Cent Magenta explores the intersection of obsessive pursuits and great affluence and asks why we want most what is most rare.

(An) absorbing tale of the rarefied world of high-stakes philately. Library Journal Delightful. The Washington Post Quirky and informative. Publishers Weekly A scintillating foray into what makes something collectible, valuable, and enduring. Kirkus s This delightful short book is a good bet for readers of nonfiction, especially those who enjoy microhistories. Booklist Exhilarating. Seattle Book Interesting Even without an interest in stamps and their collection, one should find this book worthy of reading as it winds its way through the years and the various intrigues and machinations which characterize this singular and valuable item. New York Journal of Books The voyage into Stamp World is like the world itself: detailed, ruminative and filled with arcane detours ultimately leading to a destination whose rewards are subtle yet satisfying. Minneapolis Star Tribune Barrons layered, complex genealogy-of-motivations for the stamps suitors becomes the narratives yeasty and compelling attraction. Washington Independent of Books Compelling. The Chronicle-Telegram (Elyria, OH)