

# Penny Penates

The **Penny Penates** is a postcard that was posted on 14 July 1840 to Fulham in London, and addressed to the writer and practical joker Theodore Hook, who was probably also the sender and the artist. The hand-painted design on the postcard shows an image of post office clerks sitting around a giant ink well.

It was discovered in 2001 by a stamp dealer while he was examining a stamp collection, and verified by the British Philatelic Association's expert committee as genuine and the world's oldest known postcard. It is also the only known surviving example of a Penny Black stamp, the world's first adhesive postage stamp, used on a postcard. It was sold at auction in 2002 for £31,750 (US\$44,300), the most ever paid for a postcard.

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## Design

The Penny Penates postcard is made of card stock. The watercolour drawing on the face of the postcard shows a gathering of postal clerks with huge pens seated around an enlarged inkwell marked "Official". The scribes are tallying in ledgers the postage paid by mail going through the post office. The back bears the Fulham postmark; a Penny Black stamp is affixed to the top right as postage. A circular postmark underneath the inscription shows the date of 14 July 1840.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

Penates are defined as guardians of a storeroom or household.<sup>[3]</sup> Hook hand-made the coloured card of postal clerk caricatures to poke fun at them as guardians of the postal system. He designed it as a practical joke for mocking postal clerks.<sup>[4][5]</sup> It was intended as humour.<sup>[6][7]</sup>

## History

### Penny Penates



*Penny Penates*

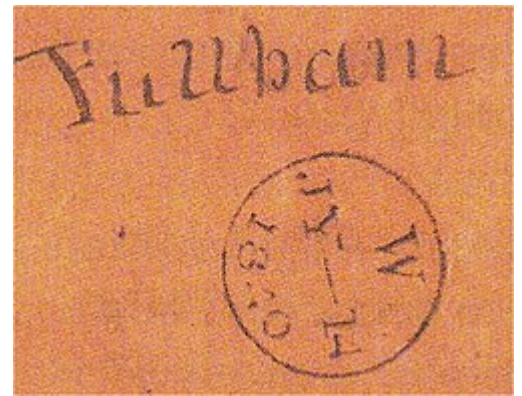
Artist	Theodore Hook
Year	1840
Type	Watercolour
Medium	Card stock
Location	Riga, Latvia



Penny Penates postcard front face painting

The Penny Penates postcard was mailed from London to Fulham, England, on 14 July 1840.<sup>[8][9][10]</sup> This is the only known use on a postcard with the Penny Black stamp.<sup>[11]</sup> The stamp was normally used just for mailing letters.<sup>[12][13]</sup> The unique stamp was the world's first adhesive postage stamp.<sup>[14][15][16]</sup>

The postcard with its stamp has been verified by the British Philatelic Association's expert committee as being genuine and the world's oldest.<sup>[17][6][18]</sup> It sold at auction for £31,750 (US\$44,300) in March 2002.<sup>[6][19]</sup> The postal historian Edward Proud said it was the most ever paid for a postcard.<sup>[4]</sup> The winning bid was made by telephone by a postcard collector from Riga, Latvia.<sup>[12][20]</sup>



Back with Fulham postmark - July 14, 1840

## Significance





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It was not realised until 2001 that the postcard was made and mailed by Hook.<sup>[21]</sup> This was recognised by an expert when he discovered the item in a stamp collection and put together the sequence of historical events. Up to that time it was believed the concept of the postcard had been invented in the United States, Germany, or Austria.<sup>[18]</sup> Twentieth-century postcard collectors thought the first postcards were made some time in the 1860s.<sup>[21]</sup> This hand-crafted card that was mailed 20 years earlier through the London postal system, making fun of the postal clerks, shows otherwise.<sup>[18]</sup>

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