

STAMP COLLECTING



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
IRVING, TEXAS

Requirements

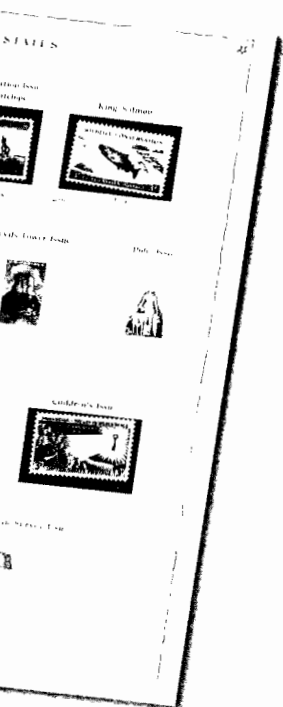
1. Do the following:
 - a. Discuss how you can better understand people, places, institutions, history, and geography as a result of collecting stamps.
 - b. Briefly describe some aspects of the history, growth, and development of the United States postal system. Tell how it is different from postal systems in other countries.
2. Define topical stamp collecting. Name and describe three other types of stamp collections.
3. Show at least ONE example of each of the following:
 - a. Perforated and imperforate stamps
 - b. Mint and used stamps
 - c. Sheet, booklet, and coil stamps
 - d. Numbers on plate block, booklet, or coil, or marginal markings
 - e. Overprint and surcharge
 - f. Metered mail
 - g. Definitive, commemorative, semipostal, and airmail stamps
 - h. Cancellation and postmark
 - i. First day cover
 - j. Postal stationery (aerogramme, stamped envelope, and postal card)

4. Do the following:
 - a. Demonstrate the use of ONE standard catalog for several different stamp issues. Explain why catalog value can vary from the corresponding purchase price.
 - b. Explain the meaning of the term *condition* as used to describe a stamp. Show examples that illustrate the different factors that affect a stamp's value.
5. Demonstrate the use of at least THREE of the following stamp collector's tools:
 - a. Stamp tongs
 - b. Water and tray
 - c. Magnifiers
 - d. Hinges and stamp mounts
 - e. Perforation gauge
 - f. Glassine envelopes and cover sleeves
 - g. Watermark fluid
6. Do the following:
 - a. Show a stamp album and how to mount stamps with or without hinges. Show at least ONE page that displays several stamps.
 - b. Discuss at least THREE ways you can help to preserve stamps, covers, and albums in first-class condition.
7. Do at least TWO of the following:
 - a. Design a stamp, cancellation, or cachet.
 - b. Visit a post office, stamp club, or stamp show with an experienced collector. Explain what you saw and learned.
 - c. Write a review of an interesting article from a stamp newspaper, magazine, book, or Web site (with your parent's permission).



- d. Research and report on a famous stamp-related personality or the history behind a particular stamp.
 - e. Describe the steps taken to produce a stamp. Include the methods of printing, types of paper, perforation styles, and how they are gummed.
 - f. Prepare a two- to three-page display involving stamps. Using ingenuity, as well as clippings, drawings, etc., tell a story about the stamps and how they relate to history, geography, or a favorite topic of yours.
8. Mount and show, in a purchased or homemade album, ONE of the following:

- a. A collection of 250 or more different stamps from at least 15 countries.
- b. A collection of a stamp from each of 50 different countries, mounted on maps to show the location of each.
- c. A collection of 100 or more different stamps from either one country or a group of closely related countries.
- d. A collection of 75 or more different stamps on a single topic. (Some interesting topics are Scouting, birds, insects, the Olympics, sports, flowers, animals, ships, holidays, trains, famous people, space, and medicine.) Stamps may be from different countries.
- e. A collection of postal items discovered in your mail by monitoring it over a period of 30 days. Include at least five different types listed in requirement 3.



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Introduction to Stamp Collecting

The world's most popular hobby, stamp collecting is enjoyed by millions throughout the world. It is known as "the hobby of kings and kids." Many lasting friendships have begun as a result of stamp collecting.

Through this hobby you can experience history, from the Pony Express to man's first landing on the moon. You can meet presidents from George Washington to Ronald Reagan. For most countries, postage stamps are like tiny windows that introduce the people of the world to the country's leaders, customs, history, products, and environment.

Many stamps honor famous people—statesmen, educators, inventors, royalty, and leaders of various movements or services. Others recognize the achievements of organizations such as Scouting, the Red Cross, or 4-H, and still others mark holidays such as Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Easter.



Philately is the collection and study of stamps and other postal materials. A person who collects and studies stamps is called a *philatelist*.

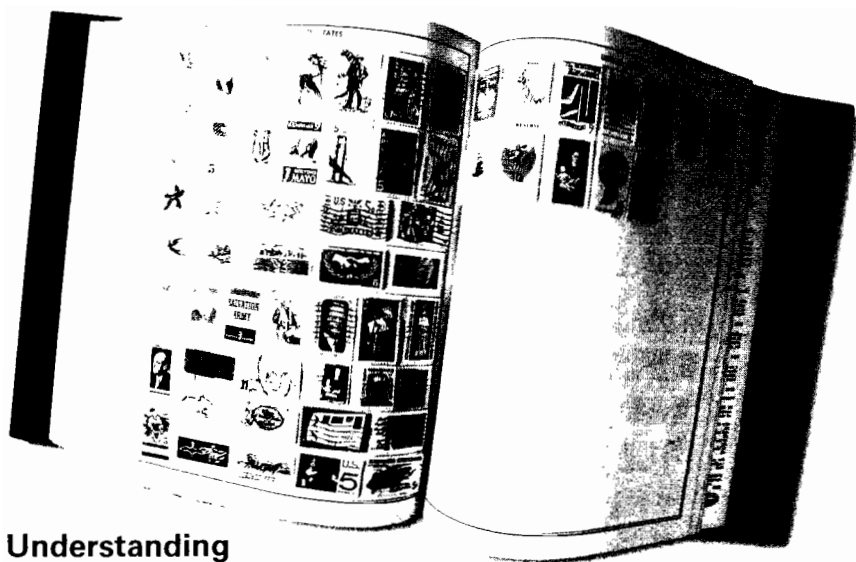
Great art and artists are represented on stamps. A stamp is a masterpiece of art in miniature. Every line, every hair must be painstakingly carved on a metal die before an engraved stamp is printed.

Some *philatelists* collect stamps from one or a few countries—the United States or the former British Commonwealth, for example. Others collect stamps from all over the world. This type of collection is called a *general collection*. Some general collectors collect stamps issued during specific years or periods—from the time they were born to the present, for example, or only those issued during World War II.

Topical collectors concentrate on what is shown on the design of the stamp—outer space, historical figures, horses, dogs, flowers, trains, sports or athletes, and so on.

The way you collect and what you collect should be based upon your personal interests. Collect what you enjoy—and enjoy learning about what you collect.





Understanding People, Places, and History

Over the decades since Great Britain issued the first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black, in 1840, more than 700 geographical or political entities have issued stamps of their own. Today, more than 245 postal administrations around the world continue to issue stamps. There are far too many stamps for any one person to collect them all—so you need to concentrate your collection in some way.

Let's begin by looking at the many different possibilities a beginning stamp collector can pursue. In order to fulfill the requirements of this merit badge, you must choose one or two areas of concentration. You might decide to concentrate on stamps issued by the United States or stamps issued by other countries.



The Penny Black



For more information about U.S. stamps, visit the U.S. Postal Service Web site (with your parent's permission) at <http://www.usps.com>, or check out the *Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps*, available at many post offices and bookstores.

United States Stamps

The United States Postal Service prints 39 billion stamps per year. In 2005, the United States produced 25 new postal issues that included 105 separate designs (some issues involve numerous different stamps). Among the subjects were prominent Americans such as President Ronald Reagan, architectural works, noted American scientists, tennis star Arthur Ashe, four distinguished United States Marines, and the man behind the Muppets, Jim Henson.

Stamps also commemorated key moments of the Civil Rights movement and showcased spring flowers, constellations, architecture, airplanes and jets, sporty cars of the 1950s, and such Disney characters as Mickey Mouse, Ariel, the Mad Hatter, and Snow White. The USPS also issued the Northeast Deciduous Forest souvenir stamp sheet (with 10 separate stamp designs). This is the seventh in its "Nature of America" series that promotes appreciation of major plant and animal communities in the United States. (Meet the artist who painted the series of stamp sheets in the chapter "How Stamps Are Made.") These are typical subjects for stamps—which honor events, persons, and themes of widespread national appeal.



NORTHEAST DECIDUOUS FOREST



Northeast Deciduous Forest stamp sheet

To learn more about the stamps shown here, you can turn to a stamp catalog. Take the Northeast Deciduous Forest stamp sheet from the Nature of America series, for example. If a catalog is not available at home, your local library should have a copy of the *Scott* or *Minkus* catalogs, or the *Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps*. From the catalog we learn that these stamps were issued on March 3, 2005. The pane has 10 37-cent stamps depicting the eastern buckmoth, red-shouldered hawk, eastern red bat, white-tailed deer, black bear, long-tailed weasel, wild turkey, ovenbird, red eft (a type of salamander), and eastern chipmunk.

These stamps were printed by a process known as photogravure, in which the design of the stamp is photographed through a fine screen. The screen breaks the design up into tiny dots that are etched into a plate that holds the ink. The ink is lifted onto stamp paper when it is pressed against the plate. Other stamps are printed using lithography and offset printing techniques.

For more information on stamp printing processes, see the introduction section of the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*.

Stamps From Other Countries

You may want to collect a foreign country's stamps because you are interested in learning more about that country. Countries often picture their own geographical and historical landmarks on stamps. Some picture animals or birds native to their land.

The U.S. Postal Service has strict rules about what events or people shall be shown on stamps.

A living person or someone who has died less than 10 years ago (except for an American president) cannot be shown on a U.S. stamp.



Another reason people collect foreign stamps is that many countries issue stamps about current popular culture—movies, musical stars, celebrities, to name a few—that cannot be depicted on U.S. stamps. In October 2005, for example, New Zealand issued stamps depicting the giant ape and other characters from the movie “King Kong,” which was filmed in that country and released in 2005. In January 2006, the Austrian Postal Service issued a stamp commemorating still-living American boxing legend Muhammad Ali. Also in January 2006, the Canada Post commemorated Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. The image on the stamp came from a photograph of the Queen taken during her visit to Canada in 2002. None of these subjects could have appeared on a U.S. stamp.

CTO stamp

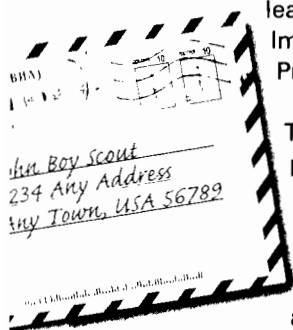


Some countries have very little or no need for stamps in their postal system and will print stamps—especially stamps with high value—only for the income they produce. Sometimes a stamp is purchased already canceled. These stamps are called CTO, or *canceled-to-order*. Typically, CTOs have a very neat cancellation that just touches one corner of the stamp. When you turn the stamp over, you will find that it still has its original gum on the back.

Friendships Around the World

Making friends doesn't have to happen in your own neighborhood. Make new and lasting friendships by finding a pen pal. Having a pen pal—someone you may never meet in person but whom you become friends with by exchanging letters—is a fun learning experience.

Aside from getting envelopes with interesting stamps and postmarks, you could exchange stamps *and* get to know someone. You might also learn about a foreign language or another culture. Imagine having a pal halfway around the world. Pretty cool.



First, get your parent's consent and assistance.

To find a pen friend, search the Web (with your parent's permission), and ask your teachers or librarian if they know of a reputable pen pal service. Some services are free; others charge a small fee. You may need to complete an application with some general information about yourself—your age, country, and hobbies, among other things. Again, be sure you have your parent's permission and help with finding a pen pal.

Your family may want to rent a post office box so that you don't have to use your street address. Have your parent read your letter to make sure you don't give out information that should not be shared (such as your phone number and daily schedule). Also, find out how much postage the letter needs; mailing a letter to a foreign country costs more than mailing one in the United States or its territories (such as Puerto Rico and Guam).

Here are some tips when it is time to start writing.

- A neat, handwritten letter is always the most personal.
- Open and close your letter with an upbeat message ("I hope you are doing well," "I'm looking forward to hearing from you soon").
- Ask about hobbies, interests, family life, pets, and customs. You can share the same type of information and, if your parent says it is OK, exchange photos, too.
- If you receive any gifts from your pen pal, be sure to let your parent know, especially if it is a food item. Let your parent check it out.
- For safety reasons, never agree to meet your friend without your parent's knowledge and permission. And, if your pen pal ever discusses anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your parent right away.

Finally, respond to your pen pal promptly—and have fun!



Stamp on foil

Most stamps are printed on paper, although sometimes, to further interest collectors, they are printed on other material, such as foil or plastic. Plastic stamps issued to satisfy collectors' interests are not used to mail letters. Sometimes called *labels*, they are not highly regarded by stamp collectors. Plastic stamps that *are* issued to meet postal needs—such as sale through postal machines, as in areas where humidity is a problem—are used to mail letters, and are of interest to collectors.

The more research you put into the stamps you choose to collect, the more you will learn and the more fun you will have. You will learn how to recognize foreign countries by the names on the stamps while learning about their history and customs.



The Egyptian pyramids depicted on an airmail stamp



Spanish stamp depicting the running of the bulls



Many of the space exploration flights by NASA have been pictured on stamps issued by other countries, such as this one from Liberia. Depicting events of other countries is a way to show friendship with those countries.

Identifying Stamps

Stamps from Great Britain show no identifying name (see figure 1). The names of other areas like Canada and Hong Kong are plainly inscribed on the stamps in figures 2 and 7. Identifying most stamps is usually just this easy, although sometimes the foreign names of the countries may be different from their English names. For example, on the stamps in figures 4 and 5, one can easily figure out that *Polska* means Poland and that *Danmark* means Denmark.

The stamp in figure 6 shows a map of Ireland and is obviously an Irish stamp. The stamp in figure 3 with the inscription *Magyar Posta* is more difficult, since there is no phonetic similarity between *Magyar* and its English equivalent, *Hungary*. With experience, collectors can learn to recognize the foreign-language names of such countries. Stamp identifier books are also available to help identify inscriptions on stamps.



Figure 1



Figure 5



Figure 2



Figure 6



Figure 3



Figure 7

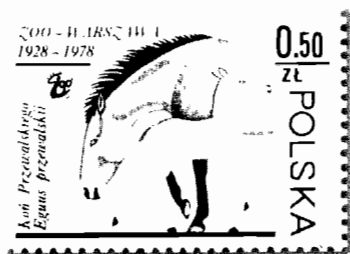


Figure 4



Types of Stamp Collecting

For many years, stamp specialists tried to collect all the stamps issued by a specific country. In spite of the great number of stamps that a country can issue and the expense associated with collecting so many, some collectors still pursue this type of collection. Stamp collecting today, though, is very flexible.

Topical Collections

Topical stamp collecting is one of the most interesting and versatile forms of the hobby. A topical collection focuses on the subject pictured on the stamp, not on the country issuing the stamp. The collector picks the focus or topic and develops it to fit personal taste.

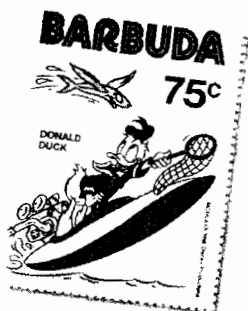
Collectors can choose from an unlimited number of topics. For some topics, a limited number of stamps will be available, while for others, there may be hundreds to choose from. The collector should pick a topic that is neither too broad nor too narrow in scope, that fits the collector's interest, and that reflects his or her ability to obtain the stamps.

A collector interested generally in sports might focus on stamps related to the Olympics or to a favorite sport, such as track, soccer, or baseball. Some collectors focus on art, music, or religion. Others might collect birds, butterflies, insects, maps, or railroads. Topical collecting is fun because it can link two or more interests into a single hobby.



Boy Scouts sometimes collect Scouts on stamps like the ones shown here. More than 135 countries have issued stamps related to Scouting.

Another fun aspect of topical stamp collecting is the arrangement and display of the collection in albums. Collectors can creatively mount the stamps in a way that appeals to their personal taste. Some collectors use computers to design special pages for a collection, but printing by hand or typing a page can serve just as well.



Topical collecting can be fun to share with others who do not collect stamps. While a specialized collection of a single set of stamps, such as the 1938 United States presidential definitives, may interest only a limited number of advanced stamp collectors, featuring aviation, baseball players, or Disney characters on stamps appeals to many people.

Topical stamps can be obtained in several ways. The most convenient and inexpensive source is your own daily mail. Also ask friends and neighbors to save stamps on the topic of your collection. If you have a family friend who owns a business, ask him or her to save pieces of mail as well.

You may also want to buy packets of stamps on major topics at stamp shops, at stamp shows, or through advertisements in magazines such as *Boys' Life*. Stamps in packets are often inexpensive because they are fairly common. This is an excellent way to start a stamp collection without spending a lot of money. Additional stamps can be added to the basic collection as your interest in and knowledge of the collection grow.

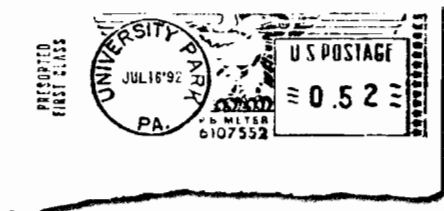
Other Types of Collections

Most experienced collectors have more than one interest in stamps. A collector can, for example, focus on stamps of the United States while specializing in trains as a topical collection.

A variety of definitive and commemorative stamps and postal stationery can make an interesting and inexpensive type of collection. *Covers*—or envelopes—showing different postal rates and classes make a challenging collection. Even advertising covers used to promote different products can be collected. Without spending a cent, you can easily collect 50 to a hundred items that reflect the complexity of the modern mail system, from your family's mail.

Some collectors specialize in meter imprints and labels. These can be collected historically, going back to the many types used since the 1920s or focusing on current use alone. Some companies use interesting slogans with the postmark. Even the design of the meter imprint can be the focus of a collection.

Postmarks and cancellations can also be interesting to collect. Some people collect postmarks that have their names in them. Others seek old postmarks from towns where they live. Some collect special cancellations, such as those that picture flags or fancy designs.



A special type of stamp, such as an airmail or postage-due stamp, can be the focus of a collection. Unusual shapes—triangles, diamonds, even banana shapes—can be the basis for a very attractive collection.

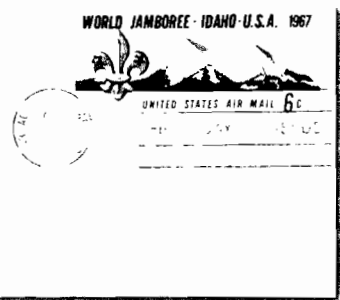


The USPS made history on March 13, 1997, when it issued—for the first time ever—the triangular-shaped Pacific '97 stagecoach and clipper ship stamps.

Still other forms of collecting are based on postal history. Collectors keep the entire cover so that the postmarks and auxiliary marks will show how the envelope went through the mail. In an election year, covers mailed by political candidates can make a colorful collection. Some people specialize in covers associated with a significant historical event—a war or a presidential inauguration, for example. Advertising covers related to a special interest—envelopes from hardware stores that show tools, envelopes from zoos that show animals, etc.—can also make an enjoyable collection.



These first day covers pay tribute to Scouting around the world.



First day covers are very popular collectibles. On the first day that a stamp is released for sale, a ceremony is held, and a special cancellation marking the release of the stamp is made available to cancel the mail. Collectors buy or prepare their own envelopes, which usually have *cachets*—pictures or words that relate to the new stamp. The envelope and the new stamp then receive the special cancellation. The USPS now allows an extended period of time after the first day to cancel and obtain these covers.

Some collectors try to get a cover for each new stamp. Others specialize in a single stamp and collect as many different cachets as possible. Contact an experienced collector or your local post office for instructions on how to obtain such cancellations. A collection of first day covers with cachets drawn by the collector can be a truly creative achievement.

A Tale of Two Collectors

Stamp collecting is for young and old alike. Brandon Heim, 13, of Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, is a typical young collector. He got started three years ago through a stamp collecting club at his school. The club's 20 members meet monthly and, once a year, travel as a group to Washington, D.C., to visit the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum as well as the headquarters of the United States Postal Service.



Brandon Heim

Like many collectors, Brandon started off by simply soaking stamps off envelopes received by family and friends. At first his collection had little focus, but soon he started seeking out stamps of U.S. presidents, the most recent of which is the Ronald Reagan stamp, issued in February 2005. Brandon also got interested in foreign stamps, buying inexpensive bags of unsorted foreign stamps. He keeps his ever-growing collection, now numbering about 8,000 stamps, in four separate albums. He now collects first day covers—envelopes or postcards specially cancelled on the day of the stamp's official release.

Brandon also keeps current in the hobby through his membership in the American Philatelic Society, a national collectors' group. "In stamp collecting, you never know what you'll find," Brandon says. "There are always new topics to learn about."

What is her collection worth? "I have no idea," Nancy Clark says. "My motivation isn't the money but the thrill of the hunt."



Nancy Clark

Nancy Clark, a retiree living in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, has a much bigger collection than Brandon, because she has been collecting for decades. Her collection is so big that she has a 20-by-40-foot room in her house called the "stamp room." It is lined with floor-to-ceiling shelves filled with books, catalogs, and other research materials, as well as copies of her stamps. She keeps the actual stamps in a vault at a local bank.

Her hunt for stamps and other postal collectibles takes her to at least five stamp shows a year—sometimes in other countries. Nancy also corresponds with other stamp collectors all over the world—mostly via the Internet. They ask each other's opinions about recent acquisitions by sending scans—computerized pictures—of their latest finds. "Before e-mail, it used to take a month to exchange letters with someone overseas. Now it can be done almost instantaneously," Clark says.

Thousands of listeners around the world tune in to Nancy Clark's weekly Internet radio program, "APS Stamp Talk." Through the program, she shares information with other collectors and, she says, "I interview all sorts of people with interesting collections." Tune in to the program online at <http://www.WSRadio.com/APSStampTalk> or download the programs for later listening as podcasts. Be sure to get your parent's permission first.

The screenshot shows the WS Radio website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'macsupport', 'Image Resizer', 'Apple', 'Mac', 'Amazon', 'New', 'Info', 'News', 'S1', and 'Apple 1551'. Below this is a banner for 'WHAT'S PLAYING NOW ON ENTREPRENEUR MAGAZINE RADIO 24/7 NETWORK. LISTEN LIVE: Entrepreneur Magazine Law & Money Show with Garrett Sutton'. The main content area is titled 'LISTEN LIVE' and shows the date 'Tuesday - May 16, 2006'. There's a search bar and a category menu with 'Sports and Recreation' selected. The main program 'APS Stamp Talk' is featured with a photo of Nancy Clark and the text 'with your host Nancy Clark Live Show on Wednesday at 10PM - 11PM EST'. To the right, there's an advertisement for the 'American Philatelic Society' with the tagline 'Serving Stamp Collectors Since 1886'. Below the ad, there are tabs for 'Recent Shows' and 'Show Pages'. A table shows a list of shows with columns for 'No.' and 'Title', with the first entry being '49 How Wade'.

Like Brandon, Nancy started her own stamp collection while in elementary school. She first focused on collecting boat stamps. Later, as a young adult, she broadened her collection to include sports stamps, particularly Olympic stamps. Her reputation grew. She served as president and judge for the international stamp show held at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia, where people from around the world entered their collections in competition.

"The winning collection always tells a story," Clark says. "It's not just a group of rare stamps."

The Language of Stamp Collecting

Like many hobbies and fields of study, stamp collecting has its own language, or terminology. You will find it easier to collect stamps when you know the hobby's special terms. As your interest and knowledge of stamp collecting grow, your stamp vocabulary will grow accordingly.

The glossary below lists some of the special terms used by stamp collectors. Additional terms and definitions can be found in stamp catalogs and other reference materials available in local libraries.

aerogramme. A letter sheet made of a single sheet of lightweight paper with gummed flaps, normally used for international airmail. When folded and sealed, the message is on the inside; the outside resembles an envelope on which a stamp has been printed, and the rate is usually slightly less than the first-class air letter rate.

Aerogramme

1835 - Mark Twain - 1910 - Halls's Cove - 1985

● I came in with H. Lee's cutter
in 1835. It's coming out in
and I expect to go out with
it. It's a goodly
the "treasure" of
appreciation of
my life at Halls's
Cove. —



airmail stamp. A stamp formerly issued to prepay airmail postage rates, especially for foreign or overseas mail, which were usually more expensive than surface mail. Since 1977, the United States mail has been carried by air, when appropriate, at no extra charge.



Airmail stamp

approval. A convenient method by which a dealer sends selections of stamps to the prospective buyer. From these stamps the collector chooses items to purchase and returns the balance with payment.

When purchasing stamps on approval, be sure to return all the ones you don't want to keep so that you won't be charged for them.

Blocks of stamps



Self-adhesive pane

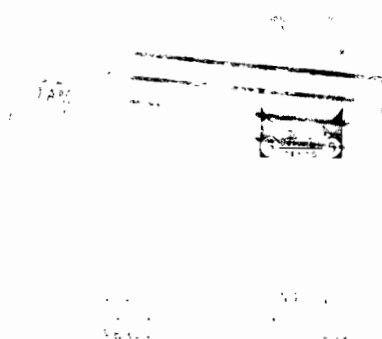
block. A unit of four or more unseparated stamps. A block of four stamps is two stamps high and two stamps wide. A plate number block shows the number of the plate used to imprint the stamp.

booklet. A small sheet of stamps specially cut to be sold in booklets. A booklet can be a self-adhesive sheet designed to be folded by the customer.



RCA BUILDING

THE NATIONAL
STAMP
EXHIBITION
OF 1934
ROCKEFELLER CENTER
NEW YORK CITY
FEBRUARY 10-18



Cachet

cachet. A design printed on an envelope to commemorate a special event such as the issuance of a new stamp, the president's birthday, or a stamp show.

cancellation. A marking put on a stamp by a postal authority that shows the stamp has been used and can't be reused.

catalog value. The value that is printed in a specific catalog indicating a price for purchasing the stamp from a dealer.



On this strip of stamps from a coil, note the plate number near the bottom of the stamp, to the far right.

PLATE NUMBER

coil stamp. A stamp issued in a long, rolled strip—with the stamps connected endways or sideways—generally for use by stamp-dispensing machines.

commemorative stamp. A stamp issued to honor an important person, place, event, or other aspect of our national culture. These stamps are usually available for sale only for a limited time at the post office.

cover. An envelope that has been sent through the mail.

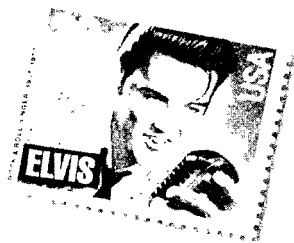
definitive stamp. A common stamp, usually small and printed in large quantities, in regular use over a period of years (until the next increase in postage rates). Also called a “regular” stamp. In contrast, commemorative stamps usually stay on sale less than a year after their issue.

error. A mistake in the production of a postage stamp that was not caught before the stamp’s release to the public. These include inverted centers and mistakes in color, paper, etc.

face value. The value, or denomination, of a stamp, as it appears on the stamp.

fake. A real stamp that has been changed in some way to make it more desirable to collectors. For example, it may have been repaired or regummed.

first day cover. An envelope with a stamp affixed that has been canceled on the first official sale date of the stamp.



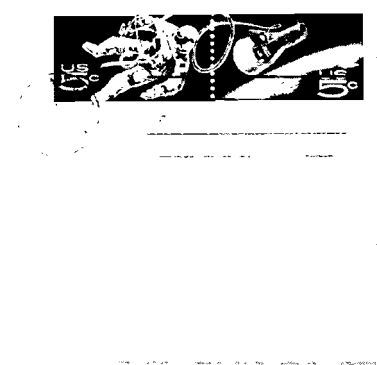
Commemorative stamp



Definitive stamp



First day cover



hinge. A small strip of paper gummed on one side and used by collectors to put their stamps in albums or on pages. Today, collectors store mint stamps with full gum or expensive stamps in a mount or a stockbook, not hinged.

hologram. An image that looks three dimensional. Holograms have appeared on some modern stamps.

imperforate stamp. A stamp issued without perforations.

Mint condition



mint stamp. A stamp that was never postally used. If a mint stamp still has all its original gum intact with no disturbances (such as a hinge mark), it is classified as mint never hinged (MNH).

mount. A clear, thin plastic holder in which a stamp is placed in an album. Mounts protect stamps by reducing handling and eliminating hinge marks. Mounts are usually used for more valuable stamps.

overprinted stamp. A stamp that has printing applied to it after original production. Overprinting may indicate the stamp has been used in more than one country or to recognize a special event, to change a stamp's value, or for other than postal use.



packet. A container full of assorted, unmounted stamps, offering an inexpensive way to begin a stamp collection.

Overprinted stamps

perforations. Small holes or slits around the perimeter of a stamp that enable one stamp to be separated from another.

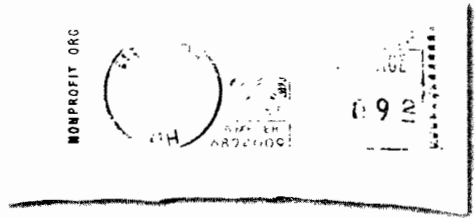
philately. The collection, study, and enjoyment of postage stamps and other postal materials.

plate number block (PNB) or coil (PNC). A block or coil of stamps bearing the number of the plate used in printing.

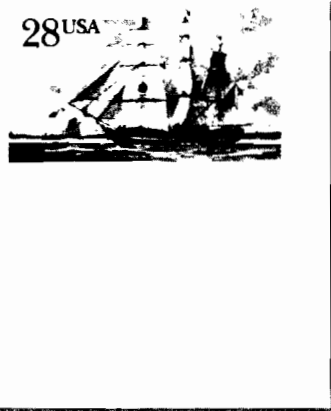


Plate block

postage meter stamps and labels. Meters are used by businesses and other organizations with large mailings. They can be set for varying amounts of postage, and include a form of a precancel that may have special slogans or marks.



Postage meter stamp



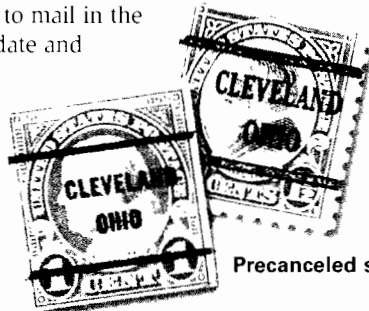
Postal card

postal card. A government-produced card, usually with a stamp imprinted in the upper right-hand corner that pays the postage fee. Also called a “stamped postal card.”

postcard. A privately produced card with a picture or information on one side and a space for a message and address on the other. A stamp must be affixed to pay the postage fee.

postmark. An official mark applied to mail in the postal system; usually includes the date and place of the mailing.

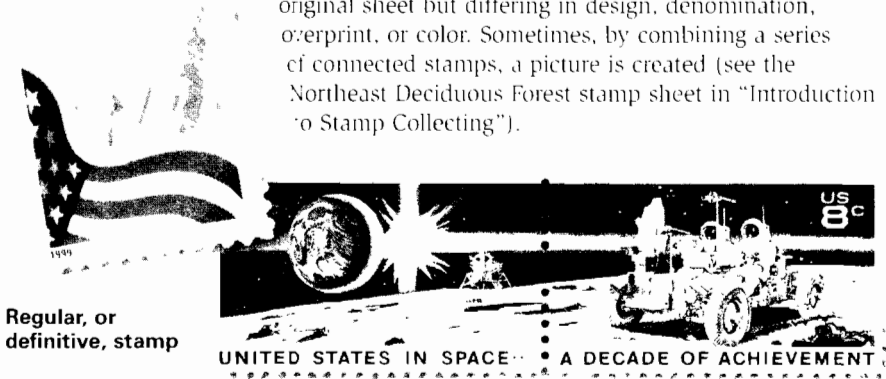
precanceled stamp. A stamp canceled before it is placed in the mail, usually by a mechanized printing process. Normally produced by heavy users of mail, these require a special-use permit from the postal service.



Precanceled stamps

regular or definitive stamp. A common stamp, usually small, in regular use over a period of years.

se-tenant stamps. Stamps joined together as in the original sheet but differing in design, denomination, overprint, or color. Sometimes, by combining a series of connected stamps, a picture is created (see the Northeast Deciduous Forest stamp sheet in “Introduction to Stamp Collecting”).



Regular, or definitive, stamp

Se-tenant stamps

self-adhesive stamp. A stamp backed with pressure-sensitive glue.

selvage. The paper margin around panes of stamps.

semipostal stamp. Postal authorities sometimes issue special stamps for which an amount is charged in addition to the regular postage. This extra fee or surcharge is designated for some special purpose that benefits special groups such as child-care and special-education agencies.

series. A number of individual stamps or sets of stamps having a common purpose or theme issued over a long period of time.

sheet. As printed, this is a complete unit consisting of four or more panes of stamps, each of which is cut apart when the stamps are sent to the post office. The size and design of the stamp affects the size of the pane and sheet.

souvenir sheet. A sheet of one or more postage stamp designs that usually has a commemorative inscription or artwork in the border.

special stamp. A stamp that may be reprinted and is used for periods longer than commemoratives but shorter than definitives. Love, Christmas, and Express Mail stamps are examples.



Special stamps

stamped envelope. A mailable envelope on which the post office has printed or embossed a stamp.



Stamped envelope

tagging. The chemical marking of postal items to help prevent mail fraud and allow them to be read by mail-sorting machines.

unused stamp. A stamp that has no cancellation or other sign of use.

used (canceled) stamp. A stamp that has been canceled so that it cannot be used again.

watermark. A design sometimes pressed into stamp paper while it is being made.



Used, or canceled, stamp

Assessing a Stamp's Value

Stamps are described in terms of their "grade" and "condition," and both affect their price.

Stamp Grade Definitions

Grade has to do with how well the stamp design is centered. Condition addresses factors other than centering.



Very Fine



Fine-Very Fine



Fine



Average

Extremely Fine. The stamp appears to be almost perfectly centered.

Very Fine. The design is very well-centered, with the four margins between 50 percent and 100 percent equal. That is, the widest margin is not more than twice the width of the narrowest margin. A stamp with the perforation barely clearing the design on any side does not qualify as Very Fine.

Fine–Very Fine. The design is well-centered. Either the vertical margins or the horizontal margins qualify as at least Very Fine (the wider margin is not more than twice the width of the narrower), while the other margins qualify as at least Fine (the perforations visibly clear the stamp design).

Fine. The perforations visibly clear the stamp design on all four sides.

Average. The perforations cut slightly into the design on one side.

Stamp Condition Definitions

Many factors, such as margins, color, and condition of the gum, are important in the valuation of the stamp. The more perfect the stamp, the higher the price. Here are some of the words used in assessing the value of a stamp:

Original Gum. Gum as applied to the stamp when it was manufactured.

Regummed. A stamp that for some reason has lost its gum and to which new gum has been applied.

No Gum. Stamps sent through the mail and removed from envelopes by soaking have no gum. Some mint stamps are issued without gum.

Never Hinged. Stamps that have never been hinged and whose gum shows no evidence of disturbance. With the development of good mounts, many collectors demand stamps that are classed as mint never hinged (MNH).

Lightly Hinged. A stamp showing a faint trace of a gum disturbance where the hinge has been removed.

Heavily Hinged. A stamp showing a hinge remnant on the back, or evidence of missing gum.

Other faults that affect the grading of stamps are missing perforations, tears, thin spots, pinholes, creases, etc. These flaws can cause a stamp to lose all or most of its value.



The Design and Production of Stamps

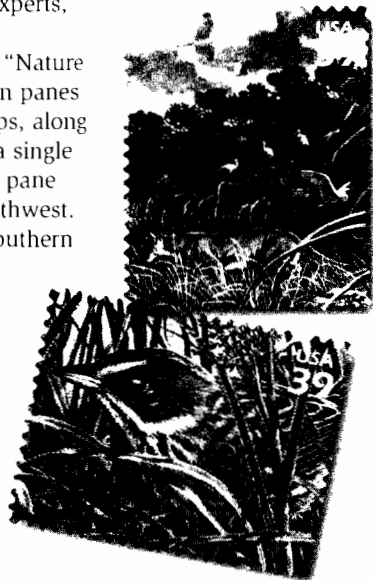
Many steps happen between the design of a stamp and the finished product used by consumers.

Birth of a Stamp Design

For U.S. stamps, the design process begins with the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee. Each year this group of volunteers sifts through some 50,000 ideas for new stamps submitted to the Postal Service. The committee members decide on only 25 subjects that will actually be made into stamps. Their goal is to pick stamp subjects that depict a broad range of people, places, and events that have affected our culture. Then the committee works with stamp designers, subject experts, and artists to come up with the finished designs.

The designs can be quite elaborate. Take the “Nature of America” series of U.S. stamps sheets, issued in panes of 10 each year since 1999. Together, the 10 stamps, along with additional space between the stamps, form a single natural scene full of plants and animals. The first pane depicted the Sonoran Desert in the American Southwest. The most recent pane, issued in 2006, shows a Southern Florida wetland.

All the panes in the series were painted by artist John Dawson of Hilo, Hawaii. For each pane, the committee supplies Dawson with a list of plant and animal species from which to choose. “Then I make rough sketches of the critters for them to look at,” he says. Subject experts review his sketches and suggest improvements, making a beak longer here, for example, or a tail wider there.





Southern Florida Wetland stamp sheet, designed by artist John Dawson

One challenge John Dawson faces is showing animals of vastly different sizes—say, a Florida panther and a sparrow—in the same scene without distorting their proportions. “I do it with a careful use of perspective,” Dawson says, “putting the big critters in the back-ground and the small critters up front.”



Once the design is approved, Dawson renders the final painting. He manages to cram 27 different species into his scene. He paints on an illustration board roughly twice the size of the 5-by-7-inch stamp pane. The image is later reduced for printing.

The Nature of America stamp sheets—eight different ones so far—have been wildly popular, selling up to 10 million copies each and making Dawson a celebrity among stamp collectors. “In March 2005, the Northeast Deciduous Forest sheet was unveiled at a ceremony during a stamp show in New York City,” he recalls. “So many people were in line, I signed autographs for two whole days.”

Because the nature stamps have sold so well, the Postal Service has extended the life of the series, with plans to issue a new sheet each year for several more years. “I wish it would go on forever,” Dawson says. “I love painting these stamps.”

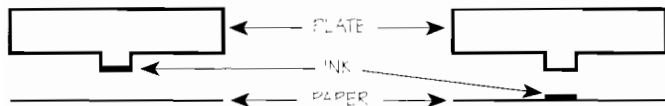
The Manufacturing Process

Once a design has been approved, an appropriate printing method is selected; then the stamps are printed; and finally, the stamps are “finished,” or processed into a particular format, such as sheets, books, or coils, using a particular type of separation.

Stamp Printing Methods

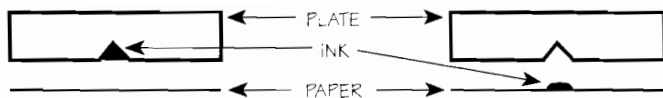
Stamps throughout the world are printed in three basic ways: with the design (1) above the surface of the printing plate, (2) level with the surface, or (3) below the surface.

Letterpress or Typography. In this printing method, the design is inked above the surface of the plate. In a rotary letterpress, the plate is a cylinder that revolves as the paper passes under it. In typography, the plate is flat, and the printing is done on a flatbed press. Most overprinted, surcharged, and precanceled stamps are typographed.



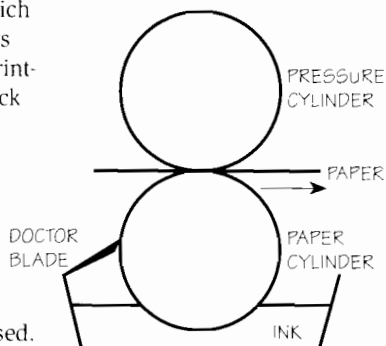
Letterpress

Each year, collectors spend up to \$200 million on U.S. stamps like Dawson's that may never be used for postage, but only for collecting and display. That added revenue helps the Postal Service offset costs in other areas.



Intaglio

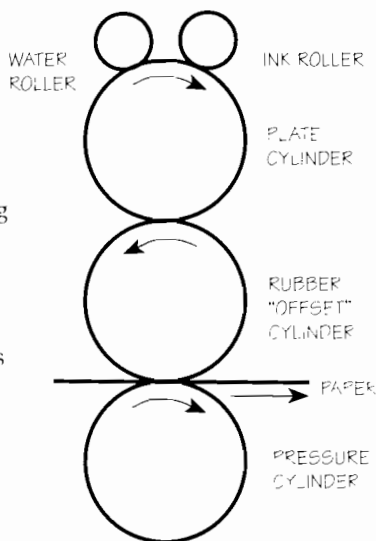
Engraving and Gravure. Both are *intaglio* processes, which means that the design stays below the surface of the printing plate. In engraving, thick ink that remains slightly raised is used, whereas in gravure printing, a thinner ink that pours like water is used. When the plate is inked, the excess ink on top is wiped clean before the paper is impressed. The gravure cylinder revolves in a tray of ink, and the excess ink on the surface of the cylinder is scraped clean by a metal blade. The etched "wells" fill with ink, and the paper, pressed against the wiped cylinder, actually pulls the ink by suction from the plate.



Gravure

Lithography or Offset

Lithography. In this printing method, the design is level with the printing plate surface. Because the oil-based ink does not mix with the water that moistens the blank area of the plate, an impression of just the design results. In offset lithography, the design is printed from the metal plate to a rubber-covered cylinder and then to the paper.



Lithography

Modern presses in all processes print several colors at the same time (except in engraving, where each color must be printed separately). Many stamps listed in catalogs as multicolored were made from four different color-process plates. By using screens of three basic colors—red, yellow, and blue—plus black, every color can be reproduced in printing.

Separations

Perforated Stamps. Perforations make it possible to separate stamps from one another with ease. Most stamps are perforated with small holes by machines that remove the paper from the holes.

Pane stamps are perforated on all four sides; booklet pane stamps are perforated on one, two, or three sides; and coil stamps are printed in strips and perforated on just two sides.

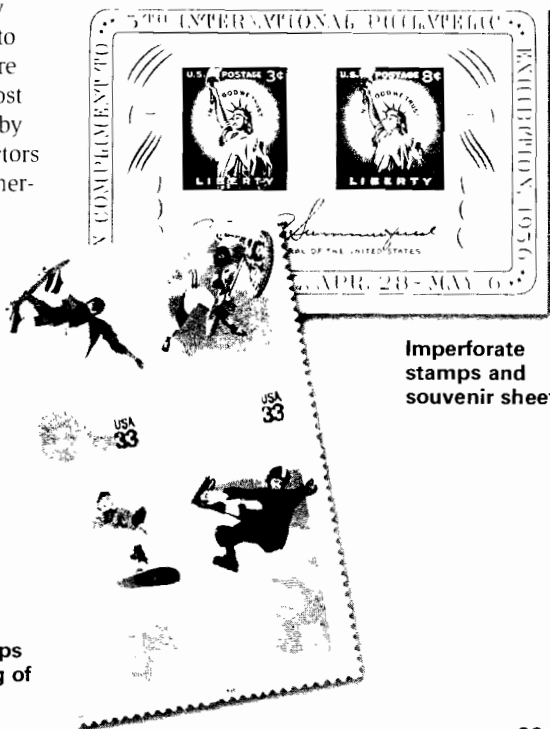
Imperfate Stamps. The early United States stamp issues had to be cut apart with scissors and are referred to as *imperf* stamps. Most imperf stamps today are issued by countries in the hope that collectors will buy the stamps, thereby generating revenue, but not use them except in their collections, thereby saving the cost of providing postal services.

Die-Cut Stamps. A cutter, or die, cuts the stamp paper into the desired shape. This form of separation is used for self-adhesive stamps. Die-cuts can give stamps straight edges, shapes, or imitation perforations.

Self-adhesive die-cut stamps make stamp-licking a thing of the past.



Perforated



Imperfate stamps and souvenir sheet

Types of Paper and Adhesive

Most stamps are printed on paper. Many are still printed with a gummed backing that you moisten for adhesion. Due to popular demand, however, more and more stamps are being made with a pressure-sensitive adhesive that requires no moistening. These stamps come with a protective backing that you peel off the stamp before affixing the stamp to an envelope.

In rare cases, paper is not used. Plastic sheets are sometimes used so that the stamps can be sold more easily in vending machines. Holographic and three-dimensional stamps also require a special printing surface.

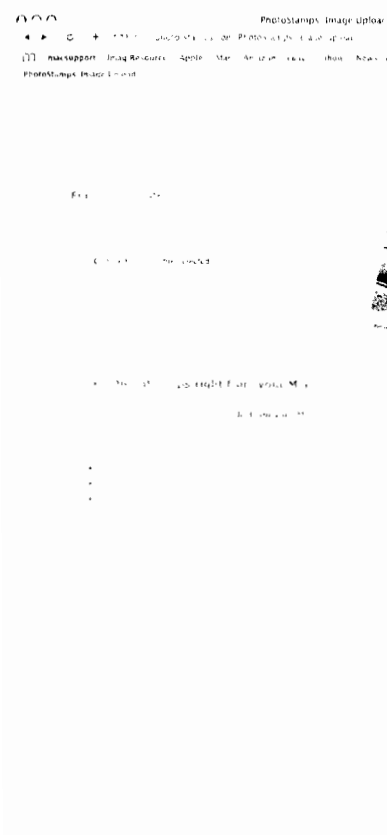
Because gum reacts with high humidity (causing stamps to stick together), countries have experimented with different types of gum. Stamps issued without gum or pressure-sensitive adhesive must have an adhesive applied by the sender.

More than
90 percent of
today's U.S.
postage stamps
use pressure-
sensitive adhesive.



Online Postage

In recent years, the USPS has let people print their own postage and mailing labels at home, using personal computers and printers. The Postal Service has also licensed outside companies, or vendors, to provide online postage products. One such company, Stamps.com, allows you to upload a photograph of your own choosing that will be made into a sheet of postage stamps that you can use in the regular mail. So it is now possible to put your own picture, or that of, say, your dog, on a real postage stamp.



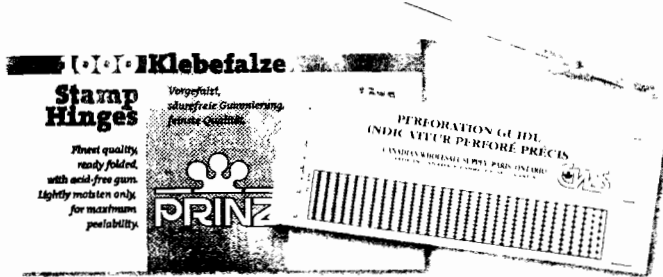
Catalogs, Equipment, and Procedures

As you learn more about collecting stamps, you will discover the resources that are most helpful to you for the type of collection you want to build.

Stamp Catalogs

The catalog published by Scott Publishing Company is used by most stamp collectors in the United States. Other catalogs are also useful, especially those covering special topics. The American Topical Association, for example, publishes several topical handbooks and checklists. Many public libraries have stamp catalogs or can borrow them from other libraries.





The *Scott catalog value* is a retail price that reflects recent selling prices. The value of stamps also depends on supply and demand. Common stamps often sell for less than catalog value. Values also rise and fall as conditions in the stamp market change.

To look up a stamp in a catalog, first determine the country that issued the stamp. Then compare its design with the stamp illustrations in the catalog. Time to identify the stamp can be saved by looking at it for clues. For example, if you find a picture of President Kennedy on a stamp, it must have been printed after 1960, the year he was elected. If there are several stamps with the same design but different identifying numbers, you might have to check the perforations, color, paper, or watermark to identify the exact stamp.

Because there are so many factors in the value of stamps, it is best to collect what you can afford and what you enjoy. If you buy stamps simply in the hope that their value will rise, you might be disappointed. You might also miss the pleasure of collecting other stamps that may be more fun to acquire and display.

Places to Visit

Visit a post office, stamp club, stamp store, or stamp show with an experienced collector, parent, or friend, or with your merit badge counselor. Your local library might have stamp newspapers, magazines, books, or other materials that will be helpful in your research.

Tip: Call in advance and make an appointment before you visit your local post office. Be sure you plan your visit during business hours when the post office is less likely to be very busy, such as midmorning or midafternoon.

BASIC INFORMATION
OF STAMP OR SET

Insects & Spiders



A2597

a. Black widow. b. Elderberry longhorn. c. Lady beetle. d. Yellow garden spider. e. Dogbane beetle. f. Flower fly. g. Assassin bug. h. Ebony jewelwing. i. Velvet ant. j. Monarch caterpillar. k. Monarch butterfly. l. Eastern Hercules beetle. m. Bombardier beetle. n. Dung beetle. o. Spotted water beetle. p. True katydid. q. Spinybacked spider. r. Periodical cicada. s. Scorpionfly. t. Jumping spider.

LISTING
STYLES
1. MINORS
2. MAJORS

SCOTT NUMBER

1999, Oct. 1

3351
a.-t.

A2597 Pane of 20
33c any single

DENOMINATION

Litho.

Perf. 11
13.00 —
65 20

METHOD USED TO PRINT THE STAMP

CATALOG VALUES

1. USED
2. UNUSED

COLOR OR OTHER DESCRIPTION

Equipment and Procedures

An important part of any stamp collection is the album in which the stamps are stored. An album helps to organize the collection in a logical order and protects the stamps from damage. You can make your own or purchase one of the many types of albums for stamps and covers on the market. A printed album with spaces for specific stamps can serve as a stamp identifier and can make mounting your stamps easier.

Reference: Scott 2001 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, Volume 1

However, as a beginning stamp collector, you might not know which topic or country you want to collect. To avoid spending a great deal of money on an album that could later be of little use, you might start with a three-ring binder and some graph paper (craft-weight). You can buy blank pages with or without borders and headings, or you can generate your own pages using a computer. This type of album makes the mixed mounting of stamps and covers easy and avoids empty spaces that make the collection look incomplete.

Tip: Do not use a “magnetic” type photograph album for your stamp collection. The adhesive used on the pages will ruin your stamps.

Another option for your three-ring binder is to use stock sheets, which are heavy pages with strips that form pockets to hold the stamps. They come with prepunched holes that fit your binder. Stock books are volumes with the stock pages bound in. In a stock book, the pages cannot be removed or rearranged.

Your albums, binders, or stock books should be stored in an upright position away from heat, moisture, and light. If stored in a damp basement or near a window, the stamps can collect moisture and be damaged. Also, avoid eating or drinking while working with your collection.

Tip: Store your stamps away from heat, moisture, light, food, drinks, and young brothers and sisters, too.

Stamps are soaked in cool water to remove them from the paper they are attached to. Once the paper and stamps have separated, place the stamps into rinse water to remove any additional paper particles; remove the stamps from the rinse water; and place them facedown on an absorbent surface. If the stamps curl while drying, flatten them under a heavy weight. New self-adhesive stamps sometimes will not separate from the envelope using only water. A special chemical (found at stamp supply stores) may be needed to remove such stamps.

Although most printed albums are organized by country, topical albums are available for special interests.

Tip: Use only cool—never hot—water to loosen a stamp from paper



A stamp *hinge* is a piece of specially gummed, translucent paper that is usually horizontally prefolded to make a hinge. First affix the short portion of the hinge to the back of an inexpensive stamp just below the top. The bottom of the hinge (the longer side) is attached to the page of the album. Apply moisture to the short side by gently touching it with the tip of your tongue and blotting it lightly on your lower lip before placing it correctly on the back of the stamp.

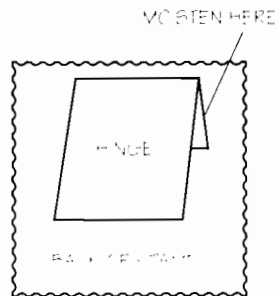
Tip: Steam or hot water may cause colors to run; soak separately any stamps that have colored cancellations or are on colored paper.

The amount of moisture you apply is important—the smallest amount will make the hinge stick to the stamp. Next, apply only a small amount of moisture to the bottom portion of the hinge to be attached to the page. You want to keep the stamp free to lift so you can view the backing.

Never attempt to remove a hinge from a freshly hinged stamp until it has dried thoroughly.

To remove a hinged stamp from an album, carefully grip the stamp and the attached hinge with tongs and gently pull down to release both from the album. The hinged stamp then can be placed facedown and the hinge pulled away slowly from the stamp. If the hinge appears to tear or pull paper fibers from the stamp, stop and soak it off with water.

Stamp mounts are small, transparent pockets into which a stamp can be slipped and mounted on a page. Stamp mounts are usually preferred for mounting mint stamps, rare stamps, and fragile stamps. The back of the mount has a special gum that, when moistened at the top, can be placed on your album page. By using this type of mount, you do not disturb the gum of mint stamps.





Stamp mounts come in a variety of sizes to suit the collector's different needs.

Several different types of mounts are available. One type is a sleeve that covers the stamp; another consists of two pieces that form a "track" for the stamp to sit in. As you become more familiar with working with stamps, you can decide which type best suits you. Why not use stamp mounts for all of your stamps? Many collectors don't, because stamp mounts are more expensive than hinges and must be purchased in various sizes to fit stamps of different sizes. With hinges, one size fits all.

Envelopes can be attached to a page with corner mounts, triangular "pockets" with gummed backs. To protect covers, a transparent protective material such as polyester film can be put over the envelope first. Both the sheet protector and the cover can then be attached safely to the album page with the corner mounts.



Tip: Do not use any type of tape, rubber cement, or glue to affix your stamps or envelopes in an album. The chemicals in these materials can quickly migrate into your collection and cause permanent damage and staining.

Store excess stamps that you haven't had time to sort yet in semitransparent glassine envelopes, which come in various sizes, or polyethylene sleeves made for storing covers (envelopes and postcards). The polyethylene sleeves are clear, allowing you to see their contents at a glance.

In addition to mounts, hinges, and albums, there are other tools you will need.

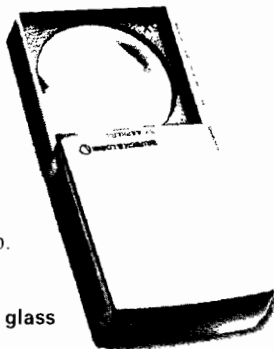
Stamp tongs



Stamp tongs look like tweezers but have rounded tips for grasping. They are approximately 5 inches long and make handling stamps much easier. Tongs also help protect stamps from soil and damage. Even when your fingertips appear to be clean and dry, they can still contain body oils and perspiration that can damage stamps.

A *magnifying glass* is helpful for examining the fine details of a stamp's design, allowing you to recognize and enjoy the fine art of an engraved stamp.

Magnifying glass



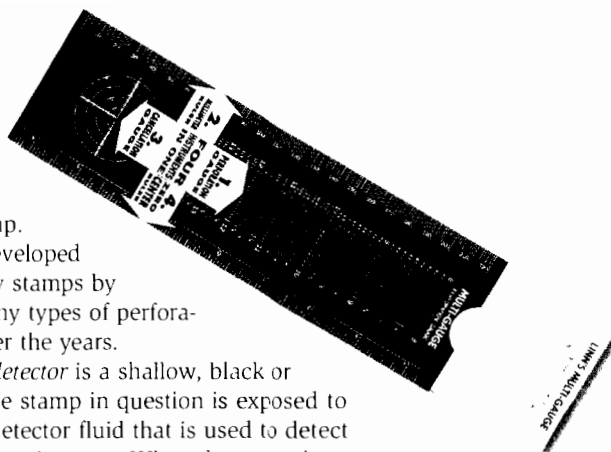
Perforation gauges are used to measure the number of holes within a 2-centimeter length on a stamp.

The perforation gauge was developed to allow a collector to identify stamps by distinguishing among the many types of perforations that have been used over the years.

One type of *watermark detector* is a shallow, black or dark-colored dish in which the stamp in question is exposed to a nonflammable watermark detector fluid that is used to detect a watermark design in the stamp's paper. When the paper is manufactured, raised areas on the rollers transfer a subtle design, called a *watermark*, to the paper pulp.

An *ultraviolet (UV) light* is a basic tool used by stamp collectors to detect and identify luminescent stamps, stamps coated with "invisible" fluorescent ink. A UV light also will help the collector determine whether or not repairs have been made to a stamp.

Tip: Ultraviolet lights are harmful to the eyes. Before using such a device, consult with your qualified merit badge counselor to learn how to take the necessary precautions.



Perforation gauge

All the special tools you will need as a stamp collector can be found at stamp shows or hobby shops that specialize in stamp collecting, through mail order, and on the Internet (only with your parent's permission and assistance).

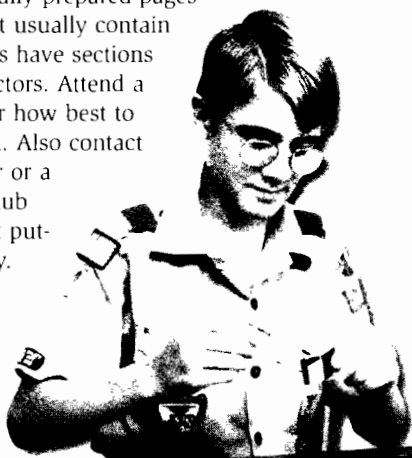


Displaying Your Collection

Part of the fun of stamp collecting is sharing it with others, whether just family and friends or the general public, say, at a stamp show. You might just pull prepared album pages from your loose-leaf notebook to display part or all of your collection. Your display should have a theme, which can be broad—such as all foreign stamps—or narrower, such as stamps from a particular country. Topical collections also make for good displays. No matter what the theme, try to arrange your collection so that it tells a story. You may wish to add a title page that explains what will follow.

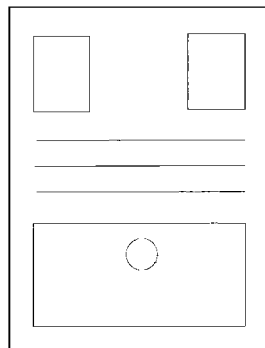
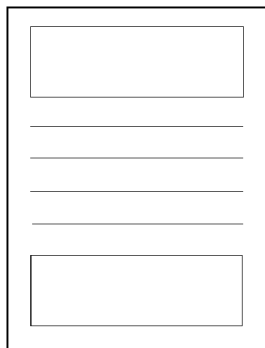
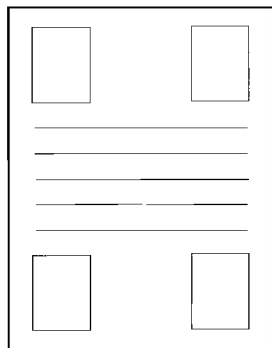
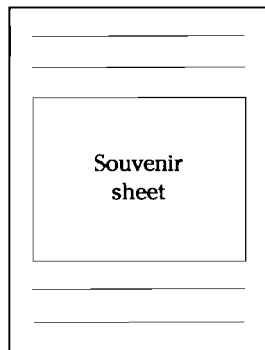
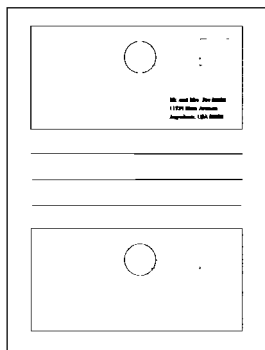
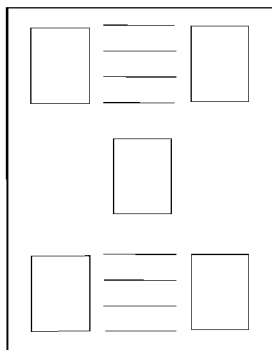
At stamp shows, specially prepared pages are displayed in frames that usually contain 16 pages each. Many shows have sections for exhibits by young collectors. Attend a stamp show to get ideas for how best to exhibit your own collection. Also contact your merit badge counselor or a member of a local stamp club for more information about putting together a good display.

For many people who begin stamp collecting at a young age, the hobby develops into a lifelong pursuit.



Ideas for Laying Out Pages

The following illustrations show some simple layouts for display pages. Remember that the layout of your collection is up to you—use your creativity.



UNITED STATES

Wild Turkey



Wildlife Conservation Issue
Pronghorn Antelope



King Salmon



Pure Food and Drug
Law Issue



Labour Day
Issue



Devils Tower U.S.A.



Door Issue



Wheatland Issue



Nassau Hall Issue



Children's Issue



Alexander Hamilton Issue



Coast and Geodesic Survey Issue





Fun Projects

There are many fun and rewarding projects that you could do to fulfill requirement 7. Here are a few suggestions.

Designing a Stamp

First determine what you would like your stamp to depict. Will it commemorate a person, place, or thing? Are there printed stamps you could use as references? Here are some examples of different stamp designs.

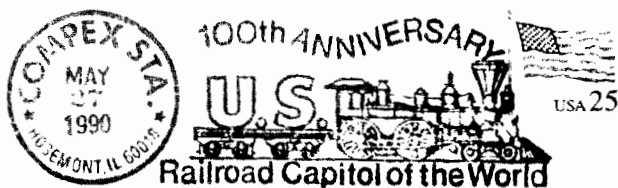


As you design your stamp, keep in mind that it does not need to be an illustration. Use a favorite photo along with your own design elements.

Designing a Cancellation

Special cancellations usually focus on a special event, cause, or theme. They can have simple designs or have complex and detailed ones that relate to a stamp, cachet, or special event. You will need to check the *Domestic Mail Manual* at your local post office or on the Internet for requirements on designing a cancellation.

With your parent's permission, visit the U.S. Postal Service online at <http://www.usps.com>.



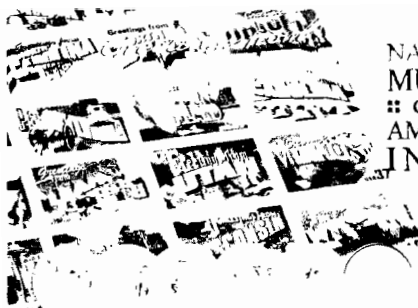
Designing a Cachet

A *cachet* is a design that is usually hand-drawn, rubber-stamped, or printed on the left side of an envelope. Cachets are usually created to draw attention to the stamp on the envelope or to an event you are promoting.

To make a cachet on a photocopy machine, open a 6 1/4-inch envelope completely. Using your imagination, draw your own design or select a picture to place on the open envelope. Make as many copies as desired. Cut each copy to envelope size, fold, and glue together to simulate an envelope (a filler card might be added before closing). Address the envelope, attach the correct postage, and have the envelope canceled by mailing it to yourself.

Your stamp design can be as simple or as complex as you desire.





NATIONAL
MUSEUM
OF THE
AMERICAN
INDIAN



Grand Opening Starts
September 21, 2004
Washington, D.C. 20025

FIRST DAY
OF ISSUE



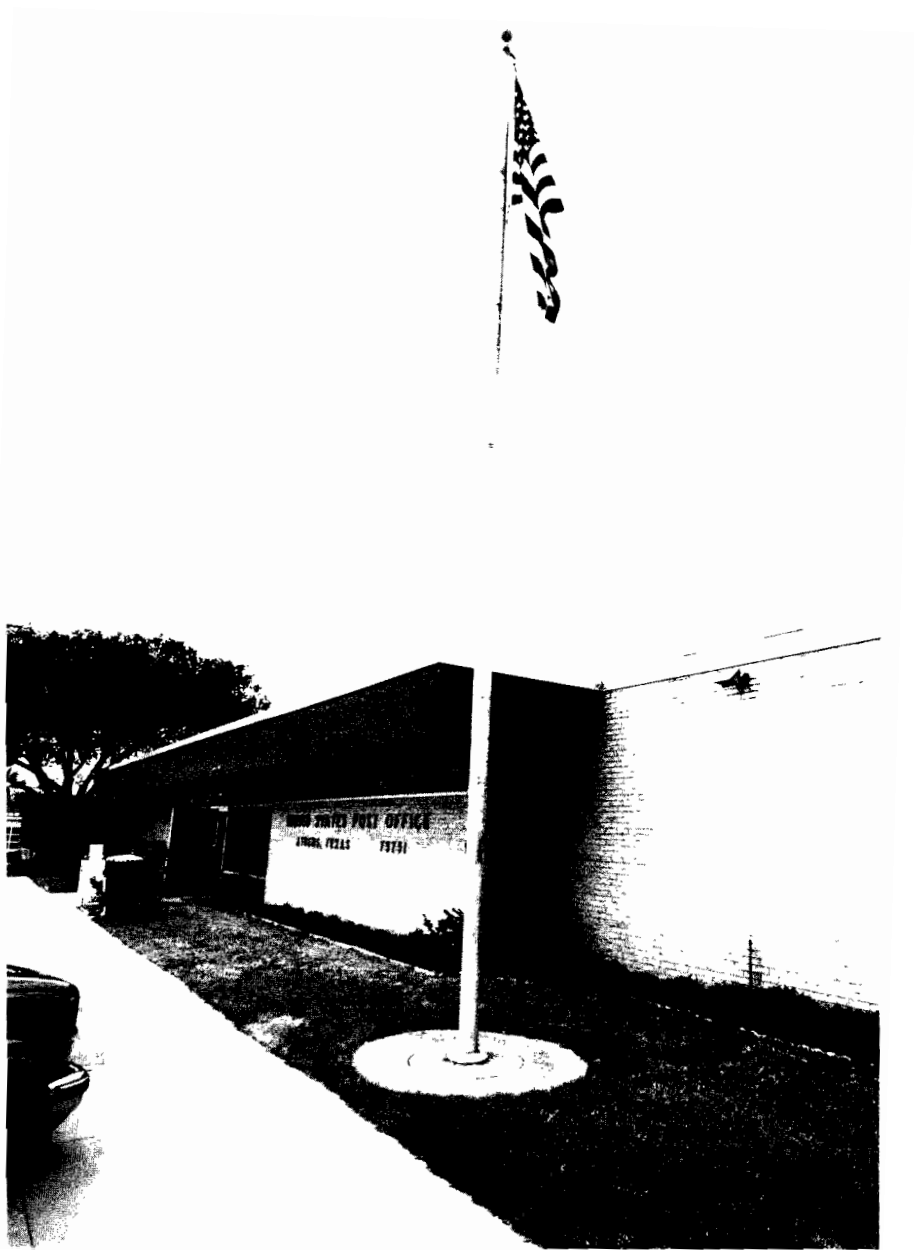
"DOES A BOY GET A CHANCE TO
WHITENASH A FENCE EVERY DAY?"

TOM SAWYER
AND
HUCKLEBERRY FINN

AMERICAN FOLKLORE SERIES

Use cachets like these
for inspiration as you
design your own.

You can easily make a cachet using your computer and printer. Design the cachet using your own software, use the "page setup" to indicate the print specifications (size, format, and so on) of the envelope, and send it to print.



The U.S. Postal Service From Past to Present

The United States Postal Service is a descendant of the oldest department in the U.S. government. That department was formed by action of the Continental Congress in 1775, and Benjamin Franklin was named the first postmaster general. When the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1789, all postal services came under the control of the federal government. The present system still reflects the many plans and methods devised by Franklin.

The means of transporting the mail progressed along with the country—from on foot, to horseback, stagecoaches, steamboats, railways, and eventually, aircraft. More recently, the USPS has been building up the world's largest fleet of alternative-fuel vehicles that use clean fuels such as ethanol and electricity.

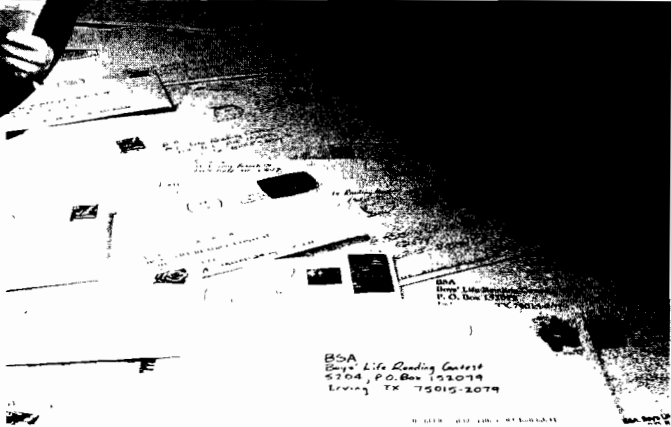
One of the most significant changes in the postal system was the adoption of postage stamps as the method of payment for carrying the mail. The first stamps were issued on July 1, 1847. This new system required the sender to prepay the fee instead of the receiver paying it. Through the years, the system has been modified and the equipment improved to keep up with the increase in quantity of mail processed.

In the early 1960s, it became obvious that there was a great need for a system that would process mail mechanically or electronically. A system using the now-familiar zip (zone improvement plan) code was installed on July 1, 1963. On September 13, 1978, the USPS announced a plan to assign an additional four-digit code to further assist in the sorting of mail.





Because of many difficulties, both financial and organizational, the U.S. Congress passed the Postal Reorganization Act, which was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on August 12, 1970. This act transformed the Post Office Department into the U.S. Postal Service, an independent agency dedicated to providing affordable and efficient mail service to everyone in the country, no matter where they live.



Handling the Mail Is a Big Job

We have all seen letter carriers delivering mail to houses. But few of us realize how big a job that really is. The USPS:

- Delivers more mail (212 billion pieces a year) to more addresses (144 million) over a larger geographic area than any other postal agency in the world
- Operates more than 37,000 post offices, 27,800 stamp vending machines, and 2,500 automated postal centers
- Takes in nearly \$70 billion a year in revenue
- Employs more than 700,000 people
- Is self-sufficient, getting by without any money from taxpayers

If we look at some of the major steps that must take place to get the letter from where it was mailed to the mailbox at your door, we can better understand and appreciate the United States Postal Service.

Let's suppose that someone places a letter to you in a mailbox in a city 200 miles from your house. Later that same day, all the letters that have accumulated in the mailbox are picked up by a letter carrier and taken to the local post office. Employees at the post office sort through the letters, separating mail designated for local delivery. The remaining mail is then sorted into two or three trays: one for the mail designated for delivery within 100 to 200 miles of the post office; one for the mail that must travel more than 200 miles; and one for the mail that will go overseas.

The trays are then carried by truck to an area processing station, where they are further sorted by zip code. In a process called *dispositioning*, the mail is *faced*, or arranged, so that the stamp is in the same position on each piece, allowing the letters to be canceled by a clerk or a machine. The trays of letters are then picked up by postal employees and loaded into trucks for distribution to local post offices or loaded onto airplanes for delivery to more distant places.

The destination post office must then sort the mail and distribute it to the proper mail carrier, who will make one final sort before delivering the mail to the appropriate address along his or her route.

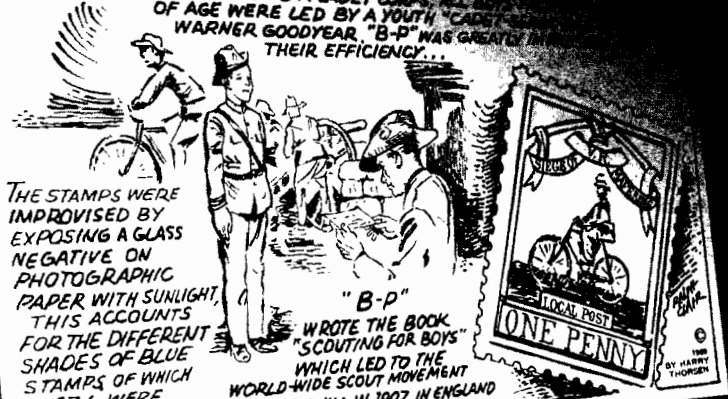


This is a simplified description of the USPS's complex procedures. Many special machines have been developed to streamline and automate the process. Advancing technology continually improves the way we get our mail.

BADEN-POWELL'S FIRST

... WAS PICTURED ON A POSTAGE STAMP OF MAPEKING, SOUTH AFRICA.

FORMED INTO A CADET CORPS. ALL BOYS OF AGE WERE LED BY A YOUTH "CADET" CAPTAIN WARNER GOODYEAR. "B-P" WAS GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THEIR EFFICIENCY...



THE STAMPS WERE IMPROVISED BY EXPOSING A GLASS NEGATIVE ON PHOTOGRAPHIC PAPER WITH SUNLIGHT. THIS ACCOUNTS FOR THE DIFFERENT SHADES OF BLUE STAMPS OF WHICH 9,476 WERE MADE

"B-P" WROTE THE BOOK "SCOUTING FOR BOYS" WHICH LED TO THE WORLD-WIDE SCOUT MOVEMENT STARTED BY HIM IN 1907, IN ENGLAND

"UNCLE DAN" BEARD HONORED ON A POSTAGE STAMP OF THE AFRICAN NATION OF TOGO



OUR FIRST NATIONAL SCOUT COMMISSIONER OF THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA, AND ONE OF SCOUTING'S FOUNDERS, DAN BEARD WAS LOVED BY AMERICAN BOYS FOR HIS MANY BOOKS AND ARTICLES IN BOYS' LIFE MAGAZINE ON CAMPING, COOKING, WOODCRAFT, PIONEERING AND NATURE.

1961



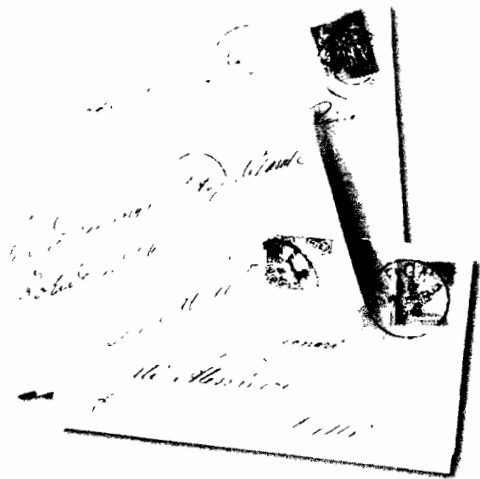
Interesting Stories About Stamps

Some stamps have interesting stories behind them. One such stamp is known as the First Scout stamp. During the Boer War in South Africa in the late 1800s, the British commander was Robert S. S. Baden-Powell. To help communications, Baden-Powell formed a cadet corps of boys, who served as uniformed messengers, carrying messages from the commander to his outposts.

During the long siege of Mafeking, the officers began producing postage stamps, mostly for their own amusement. When Baden-Powell discovered what they were doing, he suggested that his messenger, Cadet Sgt. Maj. Goodyear, be pictured on one of the stamps. These stamps were recognized as real postage stamps when the war ended in 1902.

In 1907, Baden-Powell formed the Scouting movement. In later years, he called young Goodyear his "first Scout," because Baden-Powell's ideas for Scouting had been forming during the siege of Mafeking.

The first stamp, known throughout the world as the Penny Black and depicting Queen Victoria, was introduced in England in May 1840. The stamp's use on an envelope indicated that postage had been paid. On July 1, 1847, the United States started issuing postage stamps featuring George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.





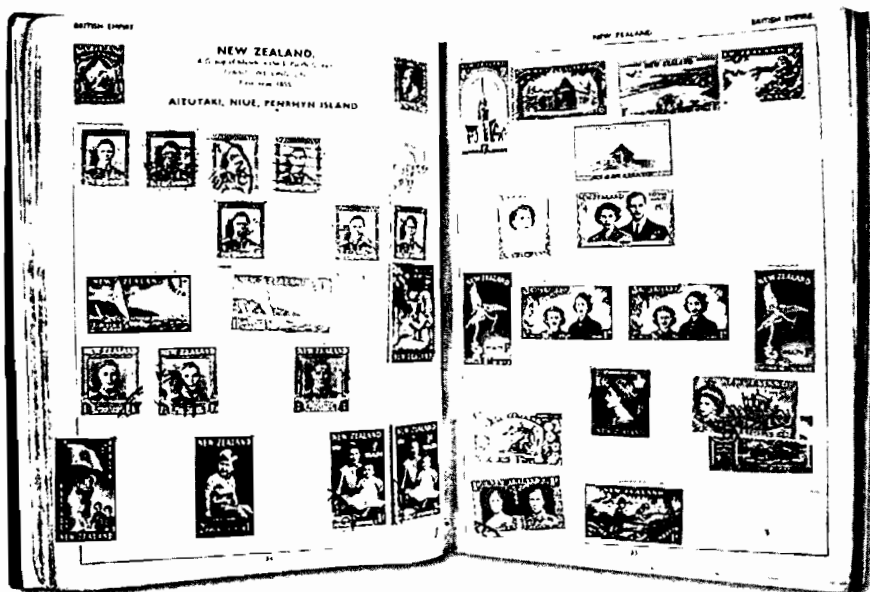
The stamp shown here is one of the world's most valuable stamps. In 1980, it was sold at auction for \$935,000, and its *face value*, or original value, was 1 cent. This stamp was printed in 1856 in the British colony of British Guiana, now the inde-

pendent country of Guyana. British Guiana's stamps normally were printed in England. This one, however, was printed in the colony as part of a temporary stock, because supplies were slow in arriving from England.

Seventeen years after it was printed, the stamp was found by a 12-year-old boy, L. Vernon Vaughan, in the attic of his home in British Guiana. He soaked it off the envelope and put it in his album, but later sold it to a local collector. It was sold many times, each time for a higher price, until 1980, when it brought the then-world's record price for a single stamp. As you can see, the corners have been clipped and the surface has been badly rubbed. But it is the only known stamp from this rare issue, and so its poor condition does not detract from its value.

In 1918, a 24-cent airmail stamp was issued honoring the Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny," a World War I biplane that became an airmail plane. About 700 of the stamps were misprinted with the plane upside down. Postal authorities destroyed 600 of the mistakes, printed in sheets of 100 each, before they were circulated. The remaining sheet was inadvertently sold to a collector in Washington, D.C., and was later resold as single stamps and panes. In 2005, a block of four "inverted Jenny" stamps sold at auction for \$2.7 million.

A stamp collection sometimes becomes valuable not so much because of the stamps in it but because of who collected them. In 2005, the Smithsonian Institution's National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C., paid \$53,000 for the boyhood stamp collection of John Lennon, a member of The Beatles, the most famous rock-and-roll band of all time.



John Lennon's album from childhood

To help build his collection, Lennon, who lived in Liverpool, England, saved stamps off of letters from relatives in New Zealand. His collection consists of 565 stamps in a single album. Pages of the album can be viewed at the museum's Web site (see the resources section).

John Lennon, who wasn't all that serious about his collection, sketched beards and mustaches on the likenesses of Queen Victoria and King George VI on his stamp album's title page.



Stamp Collecting Resources

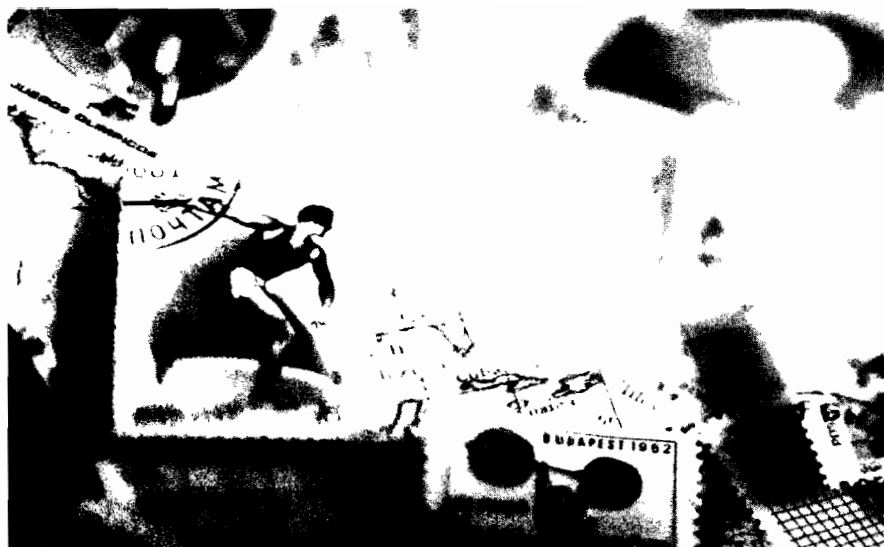
Scouting Resources

Collections merit badge pamphlet

With your parent's permission, visit the BSA's online retail catalog at <http://www.scoutstuff.org>.

Books

- Adams, Charles F. *Stamp Collecting: The Complete, Easy Guide to the World's Most Popular Hobby*. Dell Publishing, 1992.
- Baadke, Michael. *Linn's Complete Stamp Collecting Basics*. Linn's Stamp News, 2004.
- Bierman, Stanley. *The World's Greatest Stamp Collectors*. Linn's Stamp News, 1990.
- Cabeen, Richard M. *Standard Handbook of Stamp Collecting*, new revised ed. Random House Value Publishing, 1986.
- Carlton, R. Scott. *International Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Philately*. Krause Publications, 1997.
- Datz, Stephen R. *The Official Stamp Collector's Bible*. House of Collectibles, 2002.
- . *Stamp Collecting: Discover the Fun of the World's Most Popular Hobby!* General Trade Corporation, 1999.
- Dyer Sr., David O. *Is Stamp Collecting the Hobby for You?* Truman Publishing Company, 1998.
- Eisenberg, Ronald L. *The Jewish World in Stamps: 4,000 Years of Jewish Civilization on Postal Stamps*. Schreiber Publishing Inc., 2002.
- Giffenhagen, George. *Adventures in Topical Stamp Collecting*. American Topical Association, 1997.
- Herst Jr., Herman. *Fun and Profit in Stamp Collecting*. Amos Press, 1988.
- If you are requesting information from any of these organizations, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped (first class) envelope.**
- Hudgeons Jr., Thomas E. *The Official Blackbook Price Guide to U.S. Postage Stamps 2006*. House of Collectibles, 2005.
- Jonath, Leslie. *Postmark Paris: A Story in Stamps*. Chronicle Books, 2005.
- . *Stamp It!: The Ultimate Stamp Collecting Activity Book*. Chronicle Books, 2002.
- Kloetzel, James E., ed. *Scott 2006 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*. Scott Publishing Company, 2005.



MacKay, James. *The World Encyclopedia of Stamps and Stamp Collecting: The Ultimate Illustrated Reference to Over 3,000 of the World's Best Stamps*. Lorenz Books, 2005.

O'Keefe, Donna, ed. *Linn's Stamp Identifier*. Linn's Stamp News, 2004.

Sine, Richard L. *Stamp Collecting for Dummies*. For Dummies, 2001.

United States Postal Service. *Postal Service Guide to United States Stamps*. Published yearly.

Williams, L. N. *Fundamentals of Philately*. American Philatelic Society, 1990.

Youngblood, Wayne L. *All About Stamps: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Philatelic Terms*. Krause Publications, 2000.

Periodicals

Global Stamp News
P.O. Box 97
Sidney, OH 45365-0097

Linn's Stamp News
P.O. Box 29
Sidney, OH 45365-0029
Web site: <http://www.linns.com>

Mekcel's and Stamps Magazine
P.O. Box 5050
White Plains, NY 10602-5050

Scott Stamp Monthly
P.O. Box 828
Sidney, OH 45365-0828
Web site:
http://scottoonline.com/info_NEW.asp

Organizations and Web Sites

American Air Mail Society

P.O. Box 110
Mineola, NY 11501-0110
Web site:
<http://www.americanairmail.society.org>

American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors

Web site: <http://www.aape.org>

American First Day Cover Society

P.O. Box 16277
Tucson, AZ 85732-6277
Web site: <http://www.afdcs.org>

American Philatelic Society American Philatelic Research Library

100 Match Factory Place
Bellefonte, PA 16823
Web site: <http://www.stamps.org>

American Stamp Dealers Association

3 School St.
Glen Cove, NY 11542-2517
Web site:
<http://www.asdaonline.com/asfree.htm>

American Topical Association

P.O. Box 57
Arlington, TX 76004-0057
Web site:
<http://www.americantopicalassn.org>

Ebony Society of Philatelic Events and Reflections

P.O. Box 1757
Lincolnton Station
New York, NY 10037-1757
Web site: <http://esperstamps.org>

Hall of Stamps (at the U.S.
Postal Service headquarters)
475 L'Enfant Plaza
Washington, DC 20260-0001

International Machine Cancel Society

3097 Trobisher Ave.
Dublin, OH 43017-1652
Web site: <http://www.machinecancel.org>

Junior Philatelists of America

Central Office
P.O. Box 2625
Albany, OR 97321

Museum of Postal History

127/131 N. Main St.
P.O. Box 9998
Delphos, OH 45833-9998

National Postal Museum

2 Massachusetts Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20002
Web site:
<http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu>

Philatelic Foundation

70 W. 40th St., 15th Floor
New York, NY 10018
Web site:
<http://www.philatelicfoundation.org>

Post Mark Collectors Club

7014 Woodland Oaks Drive
Magnolia, TX 77354-4898
Web site: <http://www.postmarks.org>

The Postal History Foundation

920 N. First Ave.
Tucson, AZ 85719
Web site:
<http://www.postalhistoryfoundation.org>

Postal History Society

8207 Daren Court
Pikesville, MD 21208-2211

Precancel Stamp Society

P.O. Box 4072
Missoula, MT 59806-4072
Web site: <http://www.precancels.org>

Scott Publishing Company

P.O. Box 828
Sidney, OH 45365-0828
Web site: <http://www.scottonline.com>

**Scouts on Stamps Society
International Inc.**

P.O. Box 6228
Kennewick, WA 99336
Web site: <http://www.sossi.org>

**Spellman Museum of Stamps
and Postal History**

Regis College
235 Wellesley St.
Weston, MA 02493
Web site: <http://www.spellman.org>

**United Postal Stationery Society
Central Office**

P.O. Box 3982
Chester, VA 23831
Web site: <http://www.upss.org>

Universal Ship Cancellation Society

747 Shard Court
Fremont, CA 94539-7419
Web site: <http://www.uscs.org>

The Washington Press

2 Vreeland Road
Florham Park, NJ 07932
Web site: <http://www.washpress.com>

**Wineburgh Philatelic
Research Library**

The University of Texas at Dallas
P.O. Box 830643
Richardson, TX 75083-0643
Web site: <http://www.utdallas.edu/library/special/wprl.html>

Foreign Postal Administrations**Australia Post**

Web site: <http://www.auspost.com.au>

Austrian Post

Web site: <http://www.post.at/english/index.html>

La Poste

Web site: <http://www.philately.post.be>

Bulgarian Post

Web site: <http://www.bgpost.bg/index.htm#Eng/index.htm>

Canada Post

Web site: <http://www.canadapost.ca>

**China Philatelic Information
Network**

Web site: <http://www.cpi.com.cn/cpi-e/cpi-e.htm>

Czech Post

Web site: http://archiv.radio.cz/postfila/index_e.html

Post Danmark (Denmark)

Web site: <http://www.stamps.postdanmark.dk>

La Poste (France)

Web site: <http://www.laposte.fr>

An Post (Ireland)

Web site: <http://www.anpost.ie>

Israel Postal Company Ltd.

Web site: <http://www.postil.com>

Poste Italiane (Italy)

Web site: <http://www.poste.it/en>

Japan Post

Web site: <http://www.post.japanpost.jp/english>

Latvijas Pasts (Latvia)

Web site: <http://www.pasts.lv/en>

P & T Luxembourg

Web site: <http://www.philately.lu>

New Zealand Post

Web site: <http://stamps.nzpost.co.nz>

Norway Post

Web site:

<http://www.posten.no/Portal/English>

Poczta Polska (Poland)

Web site: <http://www.poczta-polska.pl/znaczkki/en/index.php>

Philatelic Center of French Polynesia

Web site: <http://www.tahitiphilatelie.com>

CTT Correios (Portugal)

Web site: <http://www.ctt.pt>

Singapore Post

Web site: <http://www.singpost.com>

Posta Slovenije (Slovenia)

Web site: <http://www.posta.si/indexen.aspx?lang=EN>

South Africa Post Office

Web site: <http://www.sapo.co.za/comm/postofficeframe.html>

Swiss Post (Switzerland)

Web site: <http://www.swisspost.ch/en>

Chunghwa Post (Taiwan)

Web site: http://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/n_english/index.htm

United Kingdom Royal Mail

Web site: <http://www.royalmail.com>

United Nations Postal Administration

Web site: <http://www.un.org/Depts/UNPA>

Young collectors should also know that the United States Postal Service makes available a free "Introduction to Stamp Collecting" (publication 225). Visit your local post office or write to the U.S. Postal Service, Philatelic Sales Division, Box 449997, Kansas City, MO 64144-9997.

In addition, the U.S. Postal Service has a special program for first day covers. The USPS gives postal customers 30 days to obtain a first day of issue postmark by mail. Purchase the new stamp at

a local post office, affix the stamp to an envelope addressed to yourself (or someone else you designate), and send it in a larger envelope to the USPS. (The address appears at the bottom of each stamp release; check with your local post office.) Individual first day covers can be ordered by writing to the USPS, Philatelic Sales Division, First Day Covers, P.O. Box 219424, Kansas City, MO 64121-9424; or call toll-free 800-STAMP-24; or visit the USPS Web site at <http://shopusps.com>.

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Mekeel's and Stamps Magazine; John Murray; Scott Publishing Company; and Scouts on Stamps Society International Inc, Baden-Powell Chapter 1.

We appreciate the Quicklist Consulting Committee of the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, for its assistance with updating the resources section of this merit badge pamphlet.

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