

The Excellent Tradition of Postage Stamp Collecting

Stamp collectors, enthusiasts, and philatelists take so much interest in stamps because of the interesting story told by each stamp, and even by each stamp issue. There are a huge variety of things that may be collected in relation to stamps, and each individual collector can make a choice over categories when starting to collect.

When collecting, some opt to collect state quarters and stamps. These are commemorative folios featuring the state, its quarters, and a group of usually 4 stamps in an attractive layout. State quarters and stamps pose very little challenge to a collector as they come almost ready for display and storage.

Others opt to collect for non-stamp collectibles, like stamp lapels, or miniature mailboxes. Stamp lapels are commemorative pins issued by a particular company or country in connection to a historic event or person. The lapel, obviously, contains a stamp featuring the relevant theme. Miniature mailboxes, sold at the USPS Postal Store, are small tabletop USPS mailboxes that may be used to contain a small amount of stamps.

However, as is evident, majority of stamp collectors opt for the most vital yet simplest thing—postage stamps themselves. Postage stamps are stamps used as proof of payment for the service rendered by a postal office to provide carriage for a piece of letter, card, or mail equivalent to its pre-determined destination. However, because of the fact that stamps have been collected for decades upon decades, postage stamps are collectible in both their mint and used conditions.

Used stamps usually come cancelled, and are found in letters already delivered to their rightful destination. These may be personally acquired from correspondence with other people within the locality or abroad. However, to increase the volume of the collection, collectors at times opt to go out of their way to buy kiloware. Kiloware is the collective term used to refer to the used stamps attached to a portion of the envelope they were originally attached sold in bulk or batches by companies and organizations that receive huge volumes of mail from all over the world.

Other times, postage stamps are acquired used from other collectors selling or trading their wares.

Another form of used stamps available are first day covers (FDCs), which are stamps cancelled on the same day that they are issued.

Some opt to keep their used stamps still attached to the envelope that it came

attached to in order to avoid damaging the stamps; those with more experience can afford the risk of personally soaking or lifting the stamp off its attachment.

Soaking and lifting stamps pose the risk of completely damaging the stamp when done improperly and without adequate knowledge. For example, stamps issued before the 1940s were printed using fugitive ink, which run in water. Soaking these stamps will inevitable cause the design to fade and even completely disappear! Moreover, cancellations on the stamp may use water-soluble ink that can run onto the design when the stamp is soaked in water.

Mint or unused stamps, however, may be purchased in postal stores in various forms. They may be bought in numbers as preferred (4s or 6s, depending on preference), or in panes, which are blocks of stamps. Other times, mint stamps may also be purchased in coils. Stamp coils are in reels used in slot machines in postal offices. Smaller coils are available for individual purchases as well.

Do mint stamps hold more value than used stamps? Or is it the other way around? There is no actual objective measure that says a mint is better than a used stamp or vice versa. Instead, however, the law of demand and rarity explains best the assessed relative value that one would have over the other.

Mint stamps are more expensive should it have been the trend to use these stamps in large volumes when it was issued. On the other hand, used stamps that were so rarely used in postage during the time of its use are more expensive than mint ones.

Collecting postage stamps will never be likely a definitive and decisive collection. As it is, more than 212 billion pieces of mail are delivered every day in America. Moreover, the Postal Service issues a huge variety of stamp designs per month, with 25 citizen-proposed subjects alongside the already extensive line of regular stamps produced. However, stamps are historical pieces of note, and collecting postage stamps is taking part in a hobby that has a history all its own.