

What is in a Stamp Collecting Merit Badge that Makes It So Special?

It must have been a confusing part for people who are not so much into stamp collecting when some people say that they have acquired their first sets of stamps during their scouting years as they tried to gain some merit badges.

Basically, merit badges are reward or honors given to the "Boy Scouts of America," based upon the different activities required for them to accomplish. Each activity is centered on a particular "area of study." The object of this activity is to finish all the actions that were called for. Once accomplished, a particular merit badge is awarded to the concerned person.

Every merit badge that is given to a particular boy scout includes a leaflet or a booklet that entails all the information regarding the merit badge as well as the requirements for that particular award.

There are instances wherein some badges should be obtained by a member of the Boy Scouts of America in order to achieve the "highest rank" in the organization – the Eagle Scout.

Consequently, among the many subject areas that are included in the long list of merit badges is the stamp collecting. The stamp collecting merit badge was created in 1932 and has continuously been updated ever since. In fact, it was just in January 1, 2001 that this particular merit badge was updated.

In the updated edition of the stamp collecting merit badge, most of the changes were focused on the requirements stipulated in the merit badge. Some of the notable changes are purely textual in nature. Here are some of the examples:

1. In the 5th requirement for this particular merit badge, wherein the scout is required to show the functions of at least 3 of the given "stamp collector's tool," the letter "s" in the word "magnifier" was omitted.
2. In the 8th requirement, where the scouts are required to "mount and show" some given requirements based on a stamp album that was "homemade" or was bought at a local stamp collector retailer. The requirement on showing and mounting a "collection of 75 or more different stamps on a single topic," the word "scouts" as one of the given topics was change to "scouting," and instead of the inclusion of the term "etc." it was also omitted.

These are just the known changes in the updated version of the stamp collecting merit badge. They may seem minor in details but they could have been made for some purposes that were not disclosed.

For a gist of the requirements stipulated in the stamp collecting merit badge, here is a list, though, not in full details just to give you an idea what stamp collecting merit badge is all about.

1. Stamp collecting merit badge requires a scout to explain how history, people, geography, etc. was better understood through stamp collecting. It was also required by the merit badge that the scout should be able to know the development of the U.S. postal system as well as its difference with that of the other countries.
2. They were asked to describe the concept of "topical stamp collecting" and the different classifications of stamp collections.
3. Scouts are required to present some examples of the different kinds of stamps like the perforated stamps, coil stamps, etc.
4. Scouts were required to prove the link between the "catalog value" and the equivalent market value of the stamps. They were also asked to give details on the definition of the word "condition" when associated or linked with the stamps.
5. In order to gain stamp collecting merit badge, scouts were also required to show "at least three" of the given "stamp collector's tool" like the stamp tongs, envelopes, hinges, and magnifier.
6. Certain activities were also required to be performed by the scouts such as the proper way of mounting stamps in a stamp album. Then, they were required to talk about ways on how to contribute in the preservation of the stamps and the accessories that go with it.
7. Scouts were also required to perform any two of the given actions stipulated in the merit badge such as writing a review on a particular article from a magazine, book, or a newspaper about stamp collecting or learn to plan a stamp.
8. Lastly, scouts were asked to "mount and show" any of the given requirements in order to complete the task such as "a collection of 250 or more dissimilar stamps" taken from no less than 15 countries.

Once the scouts were able to finish all of these tasks, they will be awarded with the stamp collecting merit badge, in which they can brag about.

The bottom line is that stamp collecting merit badge, just like the other merit

badges, were created to entice the scouts to explore and learn more on the area of their interest in the same way that they learn to value each skill that they learn in the "Scoutcraft."

One of the best things about these merit badges is that these become the trigger that lures the scouts to engage into a particular interest and eventually make them a lifetime hobby.