

Stamp collecting takes stamp collectors around the globe. Many collectors collect all the countries of the world, from A to Z...



... others choose to collect just one country or a group of related countries, such as these stamps from a specialized collection of Australia and New Zealand.



Many stamp collectors favor collecting the stamps issued by our great nation.



For some, these 19th century issues hold special fascination,



others choose to collect only the 20th century issues such as these.



Collecting U.S. stamps provides collectors with a Portrait of America...
the stories on the stamps tell the story of America.

Stamp collecting is a hobby that can be personalized to any taste and pocketbook...

Some folks collect only mint stamps. These are stamps in the same condition as when they were first sold at the post office;



Mint Stamps

others prefer to collect only used stamps, stamps that have been canceled in the line of duty while carrying the mail.

They are generally less expensive than mint stamps.



Used Stamps

Some collectors like to collect a mint and used example of each stamp, and others prefer various multiples of stamps....



Mint block of four



Plate number block



Used block of four

Each collector chooses the types and formats of stamps he or she collects.

Stamps are sold in other than sheet form. Coils, which are issued in rolls, and booklets, stamps issued in small panes, are two popular formats favored by stamp users. Many collectors choose one of these formats in which to build a specialized collection.



Coil stamps issued in rolls of 100 or more are of interest to many collectors.



Booklets, issued for the convenience of the public, are popular with collectors.

It's also possible to collect stamps according to their category or purpose. Special stamps have been issued to pay postage for air mail, special delivery, postage due, official government mail, among other categories.



Air Mail Stamps



Special Delivery Stamps



Postage Due Stamps



Official "Government Use Only" Stamps

Some collectors enjoy collecting stamps based on the subject matter depicted on the stamps. They decide to pursue a particular "topic" or "theme," and build their collection by adding stamps from any and all countries which have something to do with their subject. Topical collectors collect topics such as airplanes, bridges, cats, dogs...all the way to... windmills, xenoliths, yachts and zebras.



Ships on Stamps



Flowers on Stamps



Space on Stamps



Law Enforcement on Stamps

Some build a collection around stamps with a particular attribute, such as...



Plate number single —
a single stamp adjacent to
the printing plate number



**“Socked on the nose”
or “bullseye”** —
a used stamp which contains
complete name of city, date
and time of cancel



Precancels —
stamps which have been
canceled in advance for use
by bulk mailers



Perfins —
stamps which contain the
company's initials punched
through the stamp in order
to prevent theft or misuse of
the stamps

Stamp collecting is a hobby with something of interest for everyone!
There are many grouping of non-postage stamps which are sought after by collectors.



Labels that look like postage stamps have been dubbed "cinderellas" and cover different topics.



Examples of revenue stamps, sold in order to collect various taxes. These stamps are not valid for postage.

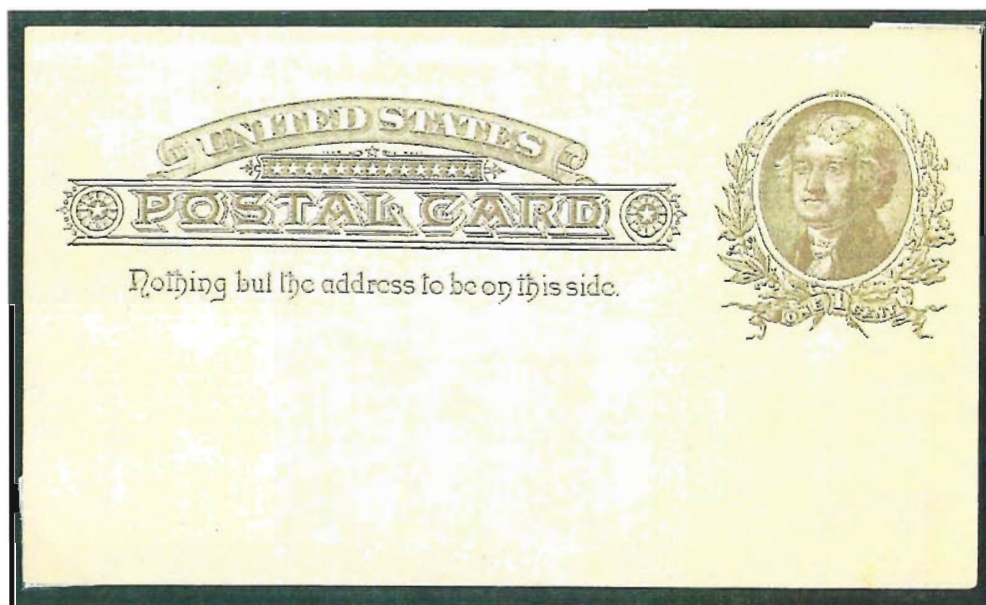


The "stamps" of private carriers, local posts, and messenger services have long been of interest to some collectors.

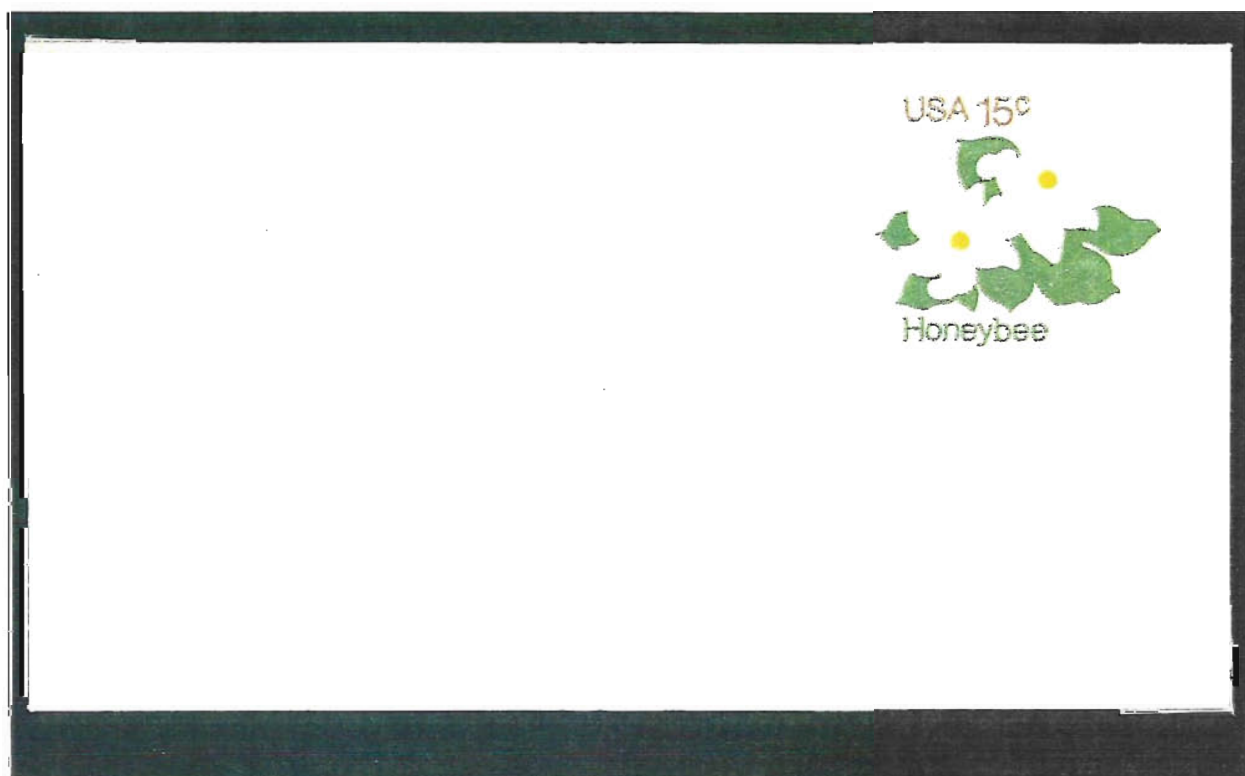


Postally related labels are some of the many groupings which some collectors pursue.

Government-issued postal cards and stamped envelopes are of interest to many collectors, and are the two most popular types of "postal stationery," which also includes aerogrammes and wrappers.



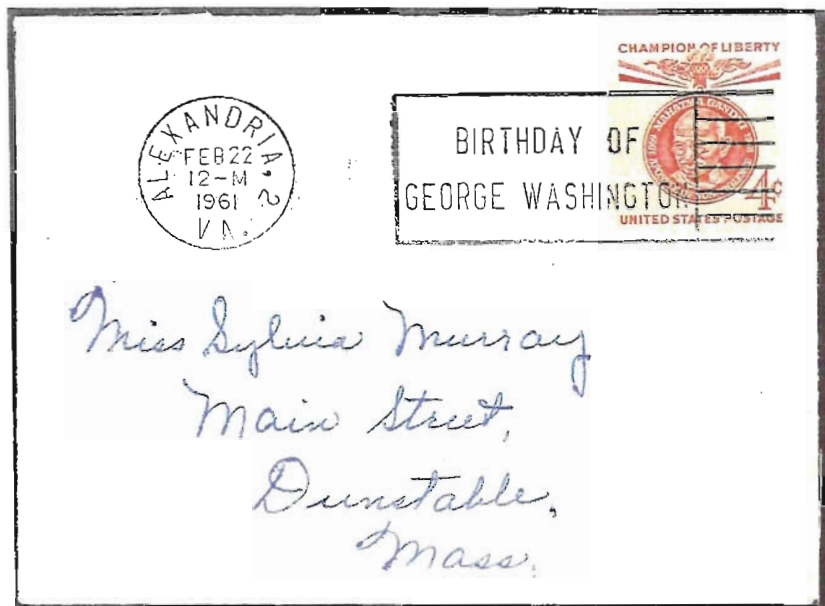
A 19th century postal card depicting Thomas Jefferson.



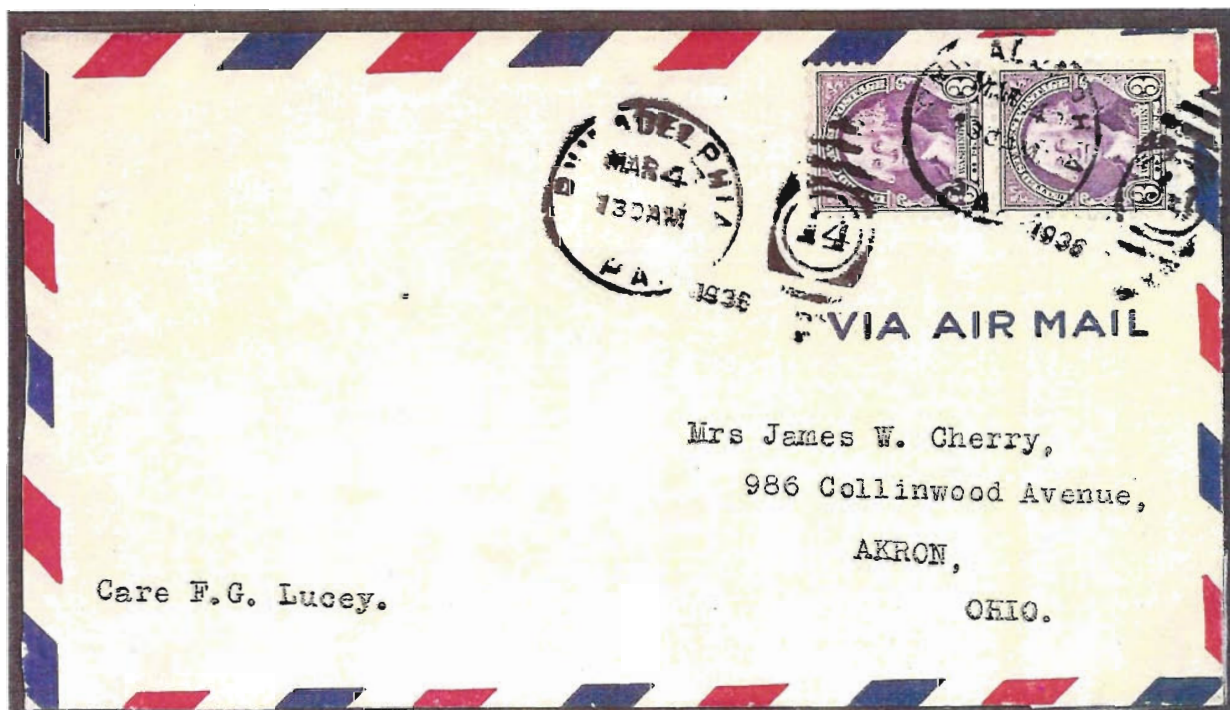
A stamped envelope featuring an embossed honeybee.

While some collectors prefer to collect mint or used stamps, others choose to collect used stamps on their original envelopes or wrappers, showing exactly how the stamps were used to carry the mail. We call these envelopes "covers."

Covers come in all shapes and sizes!

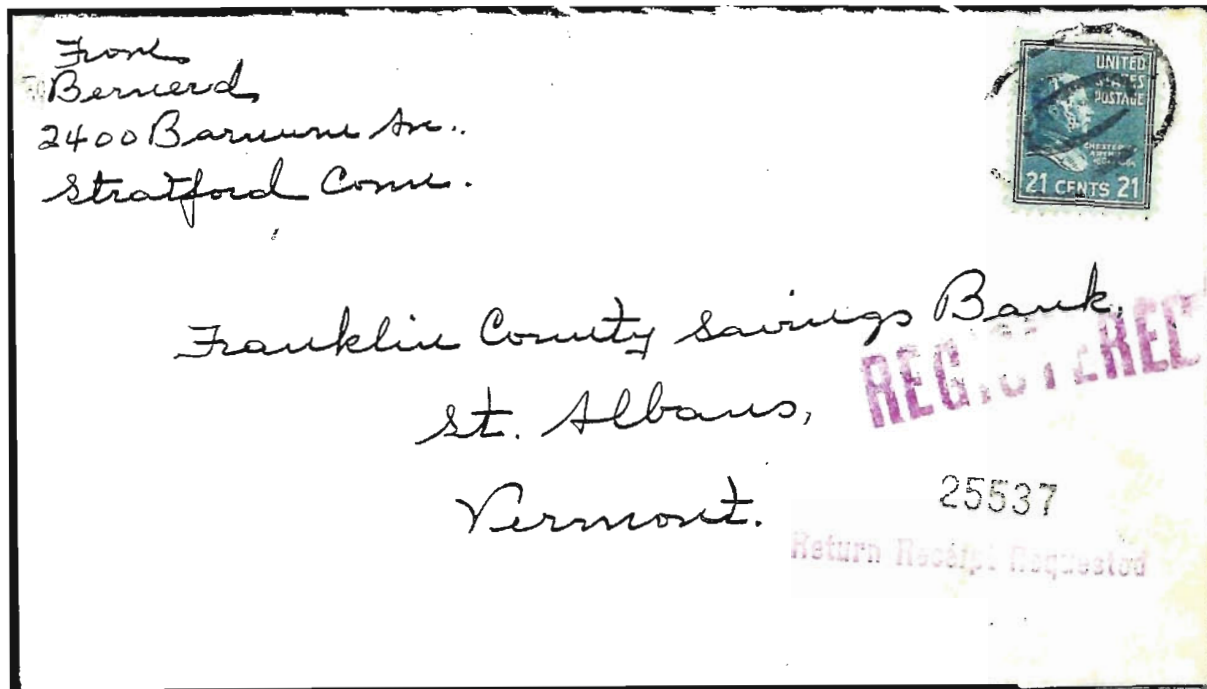


Small covers such as this one make attractive additions to collections.

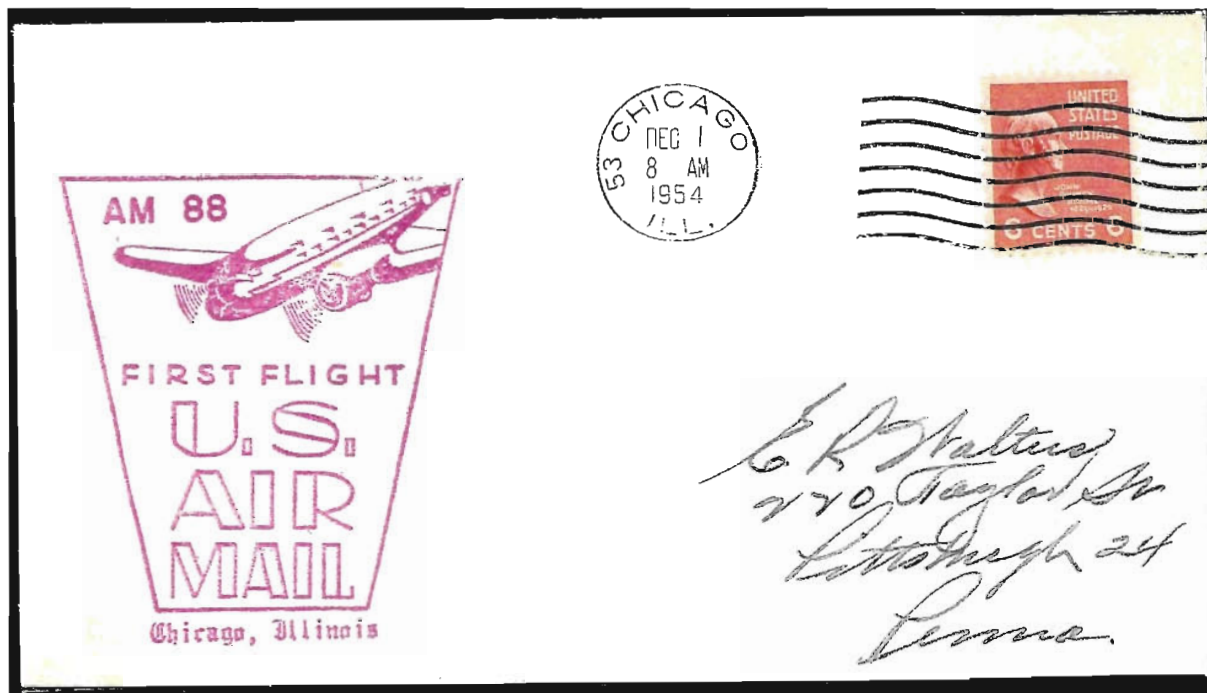


An example of a special "rate" or "usage" cover.

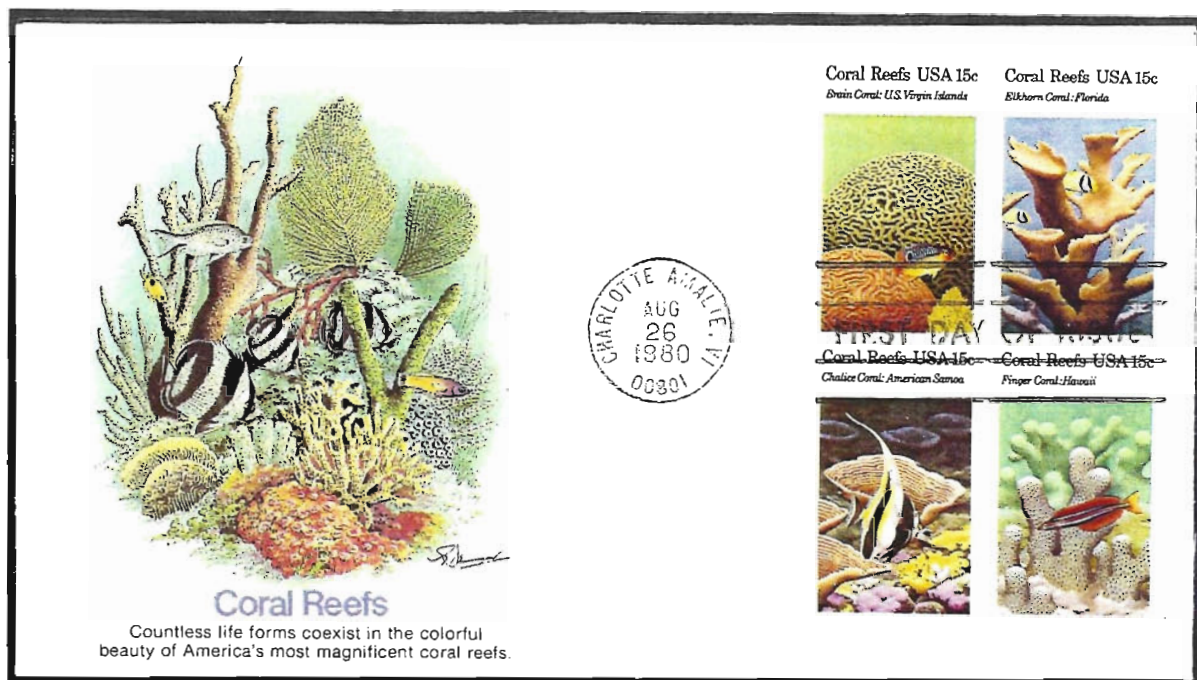
Some cover collectors seek covers which feature the same stamp used in a variety of ways.
They build their cover collection by searching for covers showing the many different postal uses and markings of the same stamp or series of stamps.



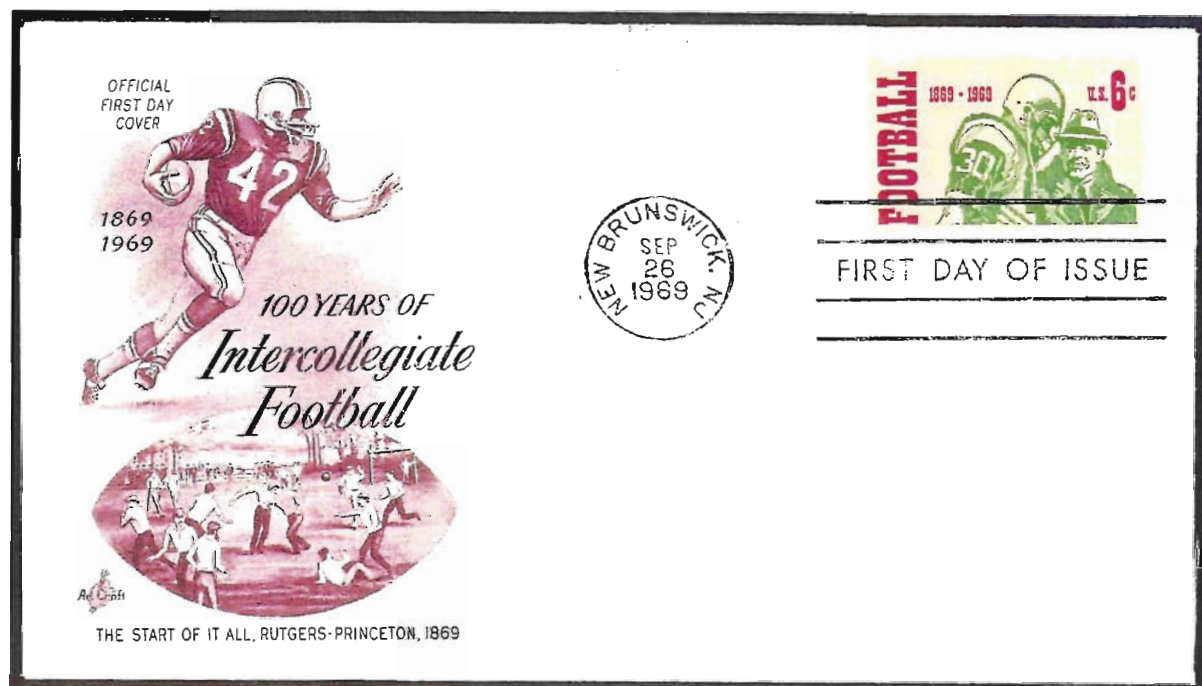
These covers are from a collection which shows how the 1938 Presidential stamps were used to meet different postage rates.



Thousands of collectors love first day cover collecting. FDCs are covers bearing a stamp which was postmarked on its first day of sale by the post office where the stamp was issued.

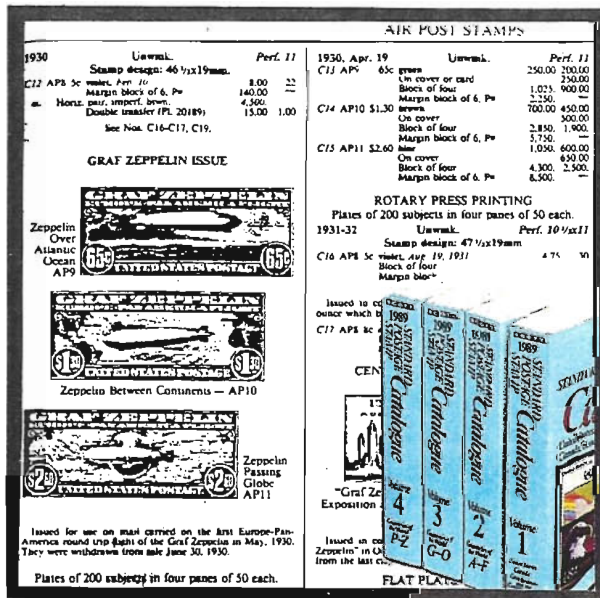


Most FDC collectors prefer to collect cacheted (ka-shayed) first day covers. The cachet is the printed portion of the envelope bearing a related design to the stamp theme.



Some FDC collectors enjoy the hunt for the work of specific cachet makers, and/or finding all the cachets produced for a given issue.

We say that a stamp has a "catalogue value." This refers to the values listed for the stamp in unused and used condition in recognized stamp catalogues in the hobby. Stamp dealers use these catalogues as a reference point in determining a stamp's "market value," the actual price for which the stamp will sell to collectors. The market value can be below, the same as or above the catalogue value, based on a variety of factors.



This \$2.60 Stamp, Scott C15, has a specific catalogue value for a fine unused copy.

Here is the stamp as it is listed in the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, the most widely used catalogue in the U.S.

- 2011 ★ #C15, \$2.60 Graf Zeppelin, an unbelievable jumbo-margined mint example, being extraordinarily well centered amid the most enormously large margins we have ever seen on this particular stamp, o.g., extremely fine; an eye-arresting gem. (photo) 1,600.00
- 2012 ★ #C15, \$2.60 Graf Zeppelin, fresh and attractive with deep rich color, o.g., n.h., extremely fine. (photo) 1,600.00
- 2013 ★ #C15, \$2.60 Graf Zeppelin, fresh and very well centered, o.g., n.h., small natural gum skips, choice very fine. (photo) 1,600.00
- 2014 ★ #C15, \$2.60 Graf Zeppelin, attractive and well centered, natural paper crease across the top causing gum disturbance to the o.g., choice very fine appearance. (photo) 1,600.00
- 2015 ★ #C15, \$2.60 Graf Zeppelin, well centered, o.g., n.h., slight perf. punch inclusion, still very fine. (photo) 1,600.00
- 2016 ★ #C15, \$2.60 Graf Zeppelin, top margin plate no. 2009! single, o.g., n.h., tiny gum skips, fine. (photo) 1,600.00

Here, to the left, is the stamp listed in an auction catalogue. Note there are numerous copies being offered in varying quality and condition. Each will bring its unique price. Reports of auction realizations, to the right, help to determine the market value of stamps. You can participate in auctions by mail or in person.

UNITED STATES				
Scott No.		Scott Value	PR	Auc Co.
C14	VF, PFC	550	325	RS
C15	S, NH, P# single, gum spec			
	nat gum crease	1600	1350	SC
C15	★ VF	1600	1050	RS
C15	★ VF, NH	1600	1300	FD
C15	★ VF-XF, OG	1600	750	DE
C15	★ XF, OG, XLH	1600	900	JK

There are many variables that affect how dealers (and, ultimately their customers!) set the market value of a stamp. The “condition” of a stamp is a key factor in determining its value.



Professional stamp dealers will point out a stamp’s condition to you and determine the market value accordingly. This is why some stamps with a catalogue value of \$500 may have a market value of only \$50 or less. Here are some examples of stamps with condition problems which have an adverse effect on their market value...



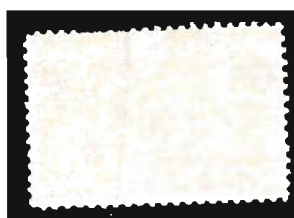
stains



tears



pen or pencil marks



folds or creases



poorly centered



faded color



damaged perforations



thins or thin spots



repaired



“piece missing”
(no matter how small)



“killer cancels”
cancels which block
much of the design.



toned or discolored
paper

Stamps are also graded by the centering of the design on its paper.
The more perfectly centered the stamp design is, the more desirable the stamp.

SUPERB



VERY FINE



FINE



GOOD



AVERAGE



POOR



(For many collectors, grading is in the eye of the beholder, and so there will be some disagreement about the stamps shown above.)