

Expertizing:

A Compilation of Selected Columns from “U. S. Stamp Notes”

John M. Hotchner

A series of columns which appeared in

Linn’s Stamp News

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INTRODUCTION

My weekly column on U.S. stamps has been a regular feature of *Linn's* since 1986. In early 2014, the newly appointed editor of *Linn's Stamp News*, Chad Snee asked me to devote one column each month to "Expertizing": Why is it important? How does it work? Who does it? How does one become an expert? What needs to be expertized -- and what does not? And lots of other questions.

Even with such a broad subject I would not have bet that 50 columns were possible; let alone the need to continue producing past that mark. That the series continues is substantially due to the experiences and questions that readers have shared in response to the columns. Such input is still welcome, and should be sent to the email address below.

As this is written in July of 2018, the subject remains far from exhausted. But I do think that what has been printed so far is a useful resource; both for collectors who may be encouraged to use expertizing services to assure that the material they buy is genuine and unaltered, and for collectors who might be good candidates to become expertizers.

It is for that reason that I agreed when Tony Wawrukiewicz, also a *Linn's* columnist (on postal history) suggested that the first 50 columns be gathered and posted on the Internet. I am thankful to him and to Mike Ludeman who did the compilation and helped with the technicalities of posting the columns. I am also grateful to Jay Bigalke, presently the editor of *Linn's* who agreed to add the compilation to *Linn's* website. I am hopeful that the compilation can be augmented by adding new columns to it on a regular basis.

This compilation is provided in the Adobe PDF file format, and requires only the same tools you use to read the digital edition of *Linn's*. I want also to note that the compilation addresses a problem that has bedeviled me in the past: "I know that I have written about a subject, or a stamp, but in which column?" The present compilation provides several approaches to resolve this problem.

The text from all of the columns is keyword searchable. There is also a **Table of Contents** page at the beginning of the PDF file which provides the date and title of each column. The viewer can move directly to the desired column if the title is sufficient to identify the topic of interest by simply moving his cursor to that column title, and doing a **Left click** on the mouse.

John Hotchner
July 2018

Editor's Note

A few days following the publications of John's 50th column on the subject of "expertizing", I had a telephone call from Tony Wawrukiewicz, who writes his own column for *Linn's*, "**Modern U.S. Mail**". He asked if I would be interested in compiling the group of these expertizing columns into a single monograph. This was not an unusual request, because I had prepared a similar compilation for all of Tony's columns during the previous year, and these compilations are now available as a PDF download from the on-line APRL catalog.

I was delighted to take on the task, and the present monograph is the result. To simplify the preparation, there was no editing or modification to the contents of each article. The pages containing each column were extracted directly from the *Linn's* digital edition, and the digital pages were edited to remove material not directly related to the column. The original files were then combined into a single PDF file, and since the original digital columns were searchable, the monograph is also searchable.

There is a new Table of Contents at the beginning of this file, and it links directly to each column. In addition, at the left side of the PDF file, there are a series of Bookmarks (these are activated by selecting the PDF bookmark icon, which looks like a ribbon with a V-shaped notch at the bottom. This bookmark display can be scrolled using the **up** and **down arrows** or by dragging the scroll button. Every care was taken to insure the quality of the text and illustrations in this compilation matched those in the original digital edition of *Linn's*.

The contents of the entire file are also searchable by **keyword** or **phrase**. You can activate this **search** feature by selecting **<CTRL/F>**, then entering the word or phrase desired in the search box, and then **<ENTER>**.

The original edition was to consist of the first 50 columns (which turned out to actually be 51 columns), and the present file continues the series through the end of 2018, with new columns added on a regular basis, and updates to the collector community at least once a year. It will be hosted on the *Linn's* website, and we hope to eventually make the final copy available to the APRL, where it will be available for downloading through their on-line union catalog by any collector interested in the subject as well.

We hope you enjoy the convenience of having all of these columns in one easy-to-access file. If you encounter problems: pages with some text not clear or improperly clipped in error, please contact the editor at the e-mail address below.

Mike Ludeman

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December 2018

Expertizing stamps: an essential part of stamp collecting

Because philatelic fakery has been practiced since the dawn of stamp collecting, expertizing — the careful inspection of stamps and covers to determine their bona fides — is well established as an essential part of stamp collecting.

Expertizing tends to be utilized at the high end of philatelic commerce to assure that material being bought and sold is the genuine article and unaltered. But there are also a great many inexpensive stamps that have been forged, and moderately priced stamps that have been altered by repairing damage or adding elements (such as perforations) to make one stamp variety appear to be another.

Covers also can be altered by adding markings, or even by adding stamps that will, if undetected, presumably increase the value.

Philatelic fakery has become easy enough that the careful buyer needs to keep an eye out, even when buying moderately priced material.

Figure 1 pictures two early 20th-century United States items that have gone through the expertizing process. One was judged to be authentic. The other was determined to be a fake.

Can you tell which is which? The answer is at the end of this article.

Questions about philatelic expertizing abound.

What services are available? Who sponsors those services? How are expertizers chosen, and what are their qualifications? What does it cost to get an opinion? Are opinions guaranteed? How reliable are old opinions? How does expertizing become part of the buying and selling process? What is included in a certificate (such as the example shown in Figure 2) and why?

And this by no means ends the practical questions leading up to the most perplexing questions of all. How is expertizing done? What are the mechanics? Can opinions be challenged?

A new column

Chad Snee, upon assuming the *Linn's* editor's chair, identified this realm as one needing more coverage, and he asked that I devote one U.S. Stamp Notes column



Figure 1. These two varieties of common stamps have been through the expertizing process. One is genuine. One is fake. Can you identify which is which?

each month to this subject, for the foreseeable future.

As with nearly all of my philatelic writing, I can probably rattle on for a long time on this subject, as I have been an expertizer for the American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX) for the past 27 years. But my preference is to be responsive to the desires and questions of *Linn's* readers.

So, I would like to hear from you with your questions, your experiences and your ideas about expertizing and how it can be done better.

I can be contacted by e-mail at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or by mail at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041.

I will not be able to immediately answer every question in a once-a-month column, but the issues raised will be a helpful guide for determining what gets discussed first. I also will try to answer every inquiry directly.

Why has Snee dropped this task on my doorstep? My field of expertise for APEX began with worldwide error, freak and oddity material, otherwise known as production varieties, and I have gradually expanded to reviewing nearly all 20th-century U.S. stamps.

What competence I have developed tracks back to having learned at the feet of George W. Brett, the senior expertizer in the field when I began.

Brett was a marvel. He wrote extensively for the monthly journal of the Bureau Issues Association (now the United States Stamp Society), knew all the pressmen at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and had studied the presses first hand.

He was a meticulous observer,

documented his findings clearly, and could usually identify what was right and wrong with items submitted for expertization — what he called his “patients” — with unerring accuracy.

When Brett was the primary expert looking at a patient, a second opinion was rarely needed. With his passing in 2005, there are now at least two and often three expertizers who review each submitted item, and all have to agree on the result, or have very strong evidence to show why a dissenter is wrong.

Brett's laws

Brett taught me three laws of expertizing. The first was to nurture a healthy skepticism when looking at patients.

The ways in which fakery is accomplished are beyond counting, and the art has improved with the times, to the point where it can be, in some few types of fakery, nearly impossible to detect. Fortunately the quality of fakery has not been so good in the overwhelming majority of cases, and the careful and knowledgeable expertizer is able to tell the good from the bad with a high degree of certainty.

The second lesson was to invest in philatelic literature, read it and understand the printing and finishing processes for stamps. Then buy, read and absorb the literature that exists on the exper-

tizing process. I will tell you about that literature in the next column in this series.

Brett's third law said to build a personal reference collection of both genuine and not genuine examples so that comparison is possible.

Money and scarcity do not allow the expertizer to own comparison pieces for every case, but then, it is not needed in every case.

Expertizing services

There are individuals who expertize on their own, and there are expertizing organizations. For philately, the major organizations in the United States are the Philatelic Foundation (PF, New York, N.Y.); the American Philatelic Expertizing Service, associated with the American Philatelic Society (APEX, Bellefonte, Pa.); Professional Stamp Experts (PSE, Newport Beach, Calif.); and Philatelic Stamp Authentication and Grading Inc. (PSAG, Satellite Beach, Fla.)

The expertizing services mostly send out patients to multiple expertizers. Why? The plain fact is that none of us is infallible, and our powers of observation are informed by different degrees of knowledge and experience.

Any disagreements among the reviewers must be thrashed out before a certificate of authenticity can be issued. The objective is to make the product as perfect as it can be.

Those of us who do expertizing do not do it because it pays well. We receive a small standard amount per item. There is no premium if the item is found to be good or bad, so there is no pressure to find one way or the other.

The modest fee in no way covers the time expended, let alone the library and the reference collection. But I have learned a great deal from studying items submitted through APEX, and have consulted on some items submitted to the PF and the PSE.

There is no price that can be put on the knowledge gained, as it has practical applications in my own collecting activities.

Expertizing results

One question that I know will be asked is, what percentage of the material that I expertise is found to

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Figure 2. This APEX certificate for a color-missing error discovered in 2011 fully describes the item examined and includes a photograph of the stamps.

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be genuine and unaltered?

This will change with the country under consideration and sometimes with the time period being reviewed.

That said, more than 75 percent of the patients tend to be genuine stamps as identified by the submitter. However, about half of those are not the variety claimed, be it different or missing colors, completely imperforate, a tagging variety, original gum or other variety.

I hope you enjoy this excursion into expertizing, and that many

of you will better understand the process as a result, and will be encouraged to use it when you have a question about something you are considering adding to your collection.

Genuine or fake?

And what about the stamps pictured in Figure 1?

The 2¢ vertically imperforate George Washington pair is a fake: The perforations were added to imperforate stamp stock.

The 2¢ Sullivan Expedition stamp, however, is a genuine lake shade variety. ■

Education helps to determine when expertizing is needed

This is the second in a monthly series of U.S. Stamp Notes articles on the subject of expertizing.

Expertizing is the process by which stamps and covers are examined to determine if they are genuine, and if so, whether they are damaged or in any way altered.

The first article appeared in the March 24 *Linn's*. In that first article I promised to provide a list in this second installment of philatelic literature that discusses the expertizing process. Some of those books will help readers understand the printing and finishing processes integral to creating the stamps you buy from the post office.

Why is that important? As a user of expertizing services, you need to educate yourself about what to look for as you consider whether a particular stamp or cover is worth the fee you will have to pay for the service. This means you need to have an idea of what the normal issue looks like, what range of varieties is known, and what range of variations is possible.

For example, the 1917 11¢ light green Benjamin Franklin flat-plate printed stamp was issued with gauge 11 perforations, but it is possible to find a variety with gauge 10 perforations at top or bottom, as shown in Figure 1.

A gauge 10 perforation at left or right on the same 11¢ stamp is not possible, and there is no point in submitting it for expertization. It cannot be a genuine variety.

Stamp references

Since this column focuses on United States philately, the literature listings will have that orientation.

The first book that should be in your library is the 2014 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*.

While it is always good to have the most recent edition, earlier editions are often available from stamp shops or other collectors.

This catalog will tell you the characteristics of genuine stamps, and what major varieties are known for each cataloged stamp. That might be sufficient background if you want to understand a normal stamp.

But the Scott catalog does not have space to list every variation known



Figure 1. The 1917 11¢ Benjamin Franklin stamp from the Washington-Franklin series is normally perforated gauge 11. However, this example is perforated 10 across the top. Is it worth the cost of expertizing to submit it for an opinion? What if it had gauge 10 perforations down the left side? Reference to a Scott catalog provides the answer.

on every stamp. A much more comprehensive understanding of what can go wrong, and how, can be gained from reading *Fundamentals of Philately, Revised*, by L.N. Williams, published by the American Philatelic Society in 1990.

This is a general reference on the production of stamps, from design through packaging for shipment to a post office. It's jam-packed 800 pages will tell you all you ever wanted to know about how stamps — both U.S. and foreign — are produced, and of equal value, how the processes can misfire to create errors and other varieties. This book is a must for expertizers as it is well written.

Though it lacks the suspense of a Sherlock Holmes tale, it can be read for pleasure as well as information. It is available from the APS and from philatelic literature dealers.

Another general information work — devoted only to U.S. stamps and covers — is the *Encyclopedia of United States Stamps and Stamp Collecting*, edited by Rodney Juell and Steven Rod, and published in 2006 by the United States Stamp Society. It is presently sold out but available from some philatelic literature dealers, and I understand it is to be revised and expanded, to be ready for release at World Stamp Show NY-2016 in New York City.

It is another whopper, at 730 pages. The more than 50 chapters provide essential information on each category of U.S. stamps and covers, as well as overview chapters, including one on the different types of errors, freaks and oddities most often seen on U.S. stamps.

On the whole, the book is less technical than *Fundamentals of Philately*, and can be used as a reference, or read front to back for pleasure.

Expertizing references

While the aforementioned books mostly discuss the basic genuine stamps — and their genuine varieties — another set of publications goes into much more depth about how genuine stamps and covers can be altered to fix defects, or to resemble more valuable stamps and covers.

Again, these works are essential for expertizers, but they are also valuable references for any collector who wants to understand what expertizers look for.

To a limited extent, that information allows you to become your own exper-

tizer: to understand what is worth submitting for an opinion, and what has a high probability of being altered.

The first of the three books on my list is a 100-page gem by Paul Schmid titled *How To Detect Damaged, Altered, and Repaired Stamps*. Published in 1979 by Palm Press, this book is of immense help with subjects like regumming, reperforating and otherwise altering routine stamps to make them appear like valuable first cousins. It is also an especially good reference on the production and properties of genuine coils.

The next two books speak to areas of U.S. philately that are major targets of philatelic fakers.

Schmid is also the author of *The Expert's Book, A Practical Guide to the Authentication of United States Stamps: Washington-Franklin Issues 1908-1922*. It was published by Palm Press in 1990.

While focused on the U.S. Third Bureau issue, its lessons are applicable to other aspects of U.S. philately, especially with regard to identifying flat-plate versus rotary printing, how die types are altered

to look like more expensive varieties, watermark detection, and the adding of perforations to imperforate stamps to make them into much scarcer varieties.

Both the Schmid books are out of print, but available from philatelic literature dealers.

A helpful pamphlet for separating the genuine Kansas-Nebraska overprints from the multitude of fakes was published by the APS in 1973.

The pamphlet contains two essays. The important one for our purposes is *Counterfeit Kansas-Nebraska Overprints on the 1922-1934 Issue* by Robert Schoen and James DeVoss.

The pamphlet is out of print, but available from philatelic literature dealers.

The APS also published it online at www.stamps.org/userfiles/file/MyAPS/Book_CounterfeitKN.pdf.

Finally, for those interested in a graduate-level course in expertizing, the Philatelic Foundation has published a series of books starting in 1983. They are titled *Opinions I* through *Opinions VIII* and subtitled "Philatelic Expertizing — An Inside View."

Each book has 20 to 40
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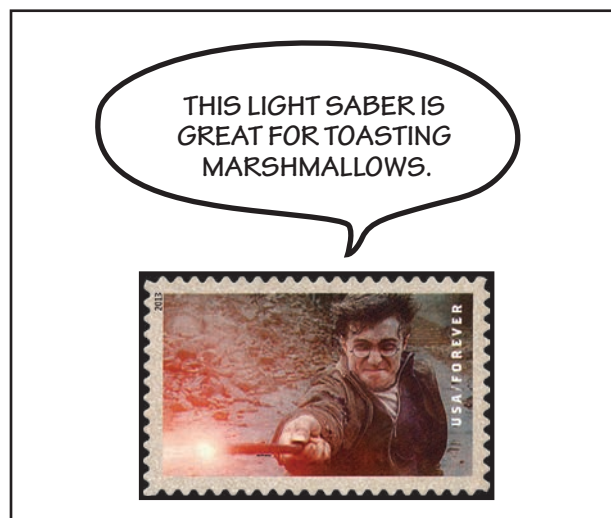


Figure 2. Richard Alsgaard of Michigan is the winner of the non-philatelic portion of the March cartoon caption contest with this line suggesting a decidedly non-high-tech use for Harry Potter's magic wand. The next contest will be announced in *Linn's* May 12 issue.

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articles by various experts, describing how they determined the authenticity, or not, of difficult items that the Foundation expertizers were faced with.

Not all of the patients are U.S. stamps or covers, but the methods used on foreign material are of general interest, and often could be used on U.S. material.

Some of the books are still available from the Foundation at www.philatelicfoundation.org, and the others are available from philatelic literature dealers, especially from the Subway Stamp Co.

A note on expertizers

In my first expertizing column, I named the big four expertizing services operated by organizations with a corps of experts, each of whom looks at material in their area or areas of special competence.

These four are the APS' American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX), the Philatelic Foundation, Professional Stamp Experts, and Philatelic Stamp Authentication and Grading Service Inc.

I also mentioned that there are individuals who run their own expertizing services. In the realm of U.S. philately, the largest of these by far is operated by dealer William R. Weiss of Bethlehem, Pa. His long experience in U.S. philately gives him a basis for expertizing the full range of this realm.

He, of course, issues his own signed certificates, while the other four do not personalize their certificates in the same way.

Next month

Next month, I will look at some of the tools that expertizers use and how they can help the careful expert arrive at an opinion.

Tools can help you determine if your stamp is worth expertizing

I promised in the last expertizing column (*Linn's*, April 28, page 6) that this installment would focus on the tools that expertizers use.

They are, for the most part, tools available to any stamp collector.

For that reason, knowing how to use them — and what to look for — allows you to make some of the judgments expertizers make.

By doing that you can narrow the unknowns, and that can help you decide whether your stamp is likely to get a positive certificate.

I am assuming that you want to get a certificate that says “genuine in all respects.”

Some students of philately also want to have fakes certified as such, and identified as to who the forger might have been.

But either way, if you can pin down some of the properties of your stamp, you can identify stamps that are not likely to pass the process. And that can save you many dollars in submission fees.

In a limited way, learning to make initial assessments means you are taking steps toward becoming your own expert — at least in the realm of United States philately.

Some of the information I'll share will apply to foreign stamps also, but this column is focused on U.S. material.

You need eight things to be your own expert:

1. Knowledge about what the stamp should look like if it is genuine.
2. Inexpensive varieties of the stamp you are trying to authenticate.
3. Good light.
4. Watermark fluid and a small black tray.
5. A specialist U.S. perforation gauge.
6. A flat/rotary (millimeter) gauge.



Figure 1. The 1914 1¢ George Washington stamps with compound perforations are valued in the thousands of dollars. A common gauge 10 or gauge 12 stamp from the same era, such as the two shown here, can help determine if a stamp that appears to have compound perforations might be genuine.

7. A 30-power magnifier.

8. Longwave and short-wave ultraviolet lights.

Knowledge about the basic stamps is available most readily from the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*. But there are other resources, some of which were mentioned in the previous expertizing column.

Inexpensive varieties of the stamp in question will not always be available, but when they are, use them.

For example, when as-



sessing if a stamp has been reperfected, compare it to a cheap stamp of the same series that has the same gauge of perforation. Not only should the spacing of the perforations match, but the shape and size of the holes should match as well.

Another example would be finding comparables for the valuable George Washington stamps of 1914 with compound perforations: those perforated gauge 12 by 10, and those perforated gauge 10 by 12 (Scott 423A to 423E). An example of each perforation type is shown in Figure 1 on the 1¢ green stamps.

If you have a stamp that you think might be one of these rarities, find a 1¢ gauge 12 stamp from the same era, and a 1¢ gauge 10, and see if the perforations on these more common stamps match up with the corresponding perforations on the compound perforation stamp you want to authenticate.

If you suspect a stamp has a missing color, putting a normal example side-by-side with the presumptive error will show you where the color should be found.

Good light is also important, such as a 75-watt bulb or better in a nearby lamp, or outside light on a partly cloudy or sunny

day. This is especially true for examining color varieties, because the human eye in dim light is not reliable.

Going back to our missing color example, good light and side-by-side comparison are important because on stamps with faked missing colors, the background white in the margins or within designs is often slightly toned by chemicals or even prolonged exposure to the sun.

Watermark fluid and a black tray are needed to detect watermarks on U.S. stamps from the first Bureau issues through the third Bureau issues, and for the \$1 Wilson stamp of the 1938 Presidential issue.

Holding a stamp up to the light or against a black background works sometimes, but it is not consistently reliable, especially with yellow and orange stamps. Nor have I had consistently good results with mechanical watermark detectors.

Place the stamp face down in the black tray and pour in a small amount of watermark fluid. To identify a watermark, look at the stamp the moment the fluid touches it, and after it is covered.

This is also a good medium for illuminating flaws such as thins and creases that will show up as darker areas on all stamps whether watermarked or not. It is also helpful in showing where repairs have been made to a damaged stamp.

Standard perforation gauges that measure the number of holes per 2-centimeter space are useful for most stamps, although such gauges are not precise.

In 1965, Richard Kiusalas developed the gauge shown in Figure 2 that measures not just the number of holes, but the precise spacing in thou-

sandths of an inch, so that, for example, there are three gauge 11 measurements for perforations: 11-70, 11-72 and 11-73.

Each U.S. stamp up to that time has a precise



Figure 3. It's easy to make your own quick identification aid to tell flat-plate stamps from rotary issues. Just cut the corners from a common normal gauge 11 flat-plate stamp. Rotary press stamps will be taller or wider than the flat-plate design.

perforation, and your patient must match it. The gauge comes with a guide that will tell you what to look for.

Thus, this is an essential tool for recognizing reperfected, and for identifying perforations added to imperforate stamps to create fakes of expensive varieties. Unfortunately, so far as I am aware, the gauge is not currently in production, but specialist U.S. dealers sometimes carry it.

Determining whether a stamp from the third or fourth Bureau issues (regular issues from 1908-38) is flat-plate printed or rotary printed can be the difference between pennies and thousands of dollars.

The millimeter measurements are given in the Scott catalog, and a millimeter gauge (often found as part of perforation gauges) is the obvious way to identify the potentially scarce stamps.

But a faster way of measuring is to take a common 1¢ flat-plate stamp

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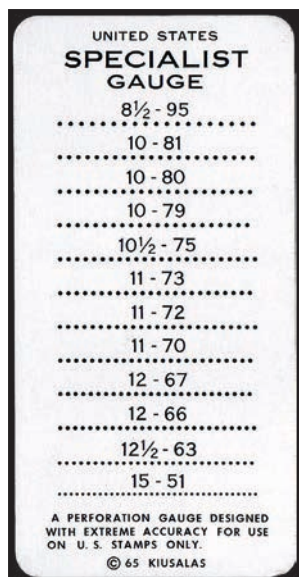


Figure 2. This Kiusalas specialist gauge can assist with accurate measurement of all 12 perforations that exist on U.S. stamps produced to the time the gauge was created in 1965.

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and cut the corners off, as shown in Figure 3. Match that against the stamp you are looking at, and the rotary press printed stamps will be significantly wider or taller than the flat-plate product. If you think it is rotary, use the millimeter gauge to confirm it.

Ten-power magnifiers are frequently seen in the hands of stamp collectors, but 30-power magnifiers are often available inexpensively from photo supply stores. An Internet search can also turn up places to purchase them.

This tool is essential for the expertizer, especially when looking at presumptive missing colors, regumming or missing perforations.

The 30-power magnification lets you see the individual dots of photogravure printing.

Since a missing color must be missing 100 percent to be designated as an error, if you see even a couple of dots of color under 30-power magnification that you can't see with the unaided eye, it

will not pass.

The same is true of imperforate errors. A pin impression under 30-power magnification will disqualify it.

The 30-power magnification is also important when looking at die types, examining double prints against kiss prints, and checking overprints, such as those on the Kansas-Nebraska issues of 1929. Shortwave and long-wave ultraviolet lamps are available as a single piece of equipment or less expensively as separates.

By comparing a stamp being examined with normal examples, these lamps can help you determine if tagging is missing, or has been altered. If altered tagging is detected, that can be a prime lead for identifying a stamp that has had its printed colors altered.

This is a very short course, but it should provide you with some helpful hints for examining your own stamps.

The bottom line is that through a combination of self-education and the use of tools available to

you, you can often determine whether you have something that it will pay you to have expertized.

Your questions and observations about expertizing are welcome, especially on matters you would like to see addressed as this series progresses.

Send me a note via e-mail at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or write to me, John Hotchner, Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041.

Cartoon winner

For the first time in the long history of the *Linn's* cartoon caption contest, more entries were sent by e-mail than by postcard. Either method works for me, but e-mailers too often forget to add their postal mailing address, which I need to write up the winners, and which *Linn's* uses to provide winners with their prizes.

The stamp used for the April contest was the 2006 39¢ Benjamin Franklin stamp in Figure 4, which makes the following entry from William David Webb of Jenkin-

town, Pa., especially appropriate: "This electricity I discovered might actually deliver messages — I could call it e-mail."

The technology divide between the 1700s and today was evident in many of the entries. Another that struck me is "What are these numbers that are being called ZIP codes?" sent by Da-

Dunlap of Gainesville, Ga., is "Poor Richard! Now there's someone who can identify with to-

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Figure 4. Joel Meyerson from Annandale, Va., wins one of two prizes in the April *Linn's* cartoon caption contest, with this line looking to the future. The next contest will be announced in *Linn's* June 9 issue.

What qualifies someone to become a stamp expertizer?

Thank you to the many readers who have stopped me at stamp shows or have sent in questions and observations about expertizing since the first column on this subject debuted as a monthly feature in U.S. Stamp Notes three months ago.

Over time I will get to all the questions, but the most urgent one seems to be this: "Who appoints experts and what makes an expert so bold as to accept?"

Sometimes the question has been posed with a negative twist; sort of "Who the heck do you people think you are, holding yourself out as superior?"

Before answering this, we need to be clear on a concept.

That concept is that what you get from an expert, and by extension from an expertizing service, is

a certificate from even 30 or 40 years ago, and want an item re-submitted for a current certificate.

Experts join expertizing services in two ways. Either they are asked or they volunteer. In both cases, their qualifications and experience are examined by the service administrators, and if that is promising, they might be added to the rolls.

But this is not the end of the process. All opinions are constantly being looked at by other experts and by the administrators — a sort of peer review. And if they are not consistently accurate and well reasoned, the expert will not last long as a member of an expert committee.

What kinds of qualifications and experience would suggest that someone has reached expert status? The person should be a longtime collector of the area to be expertized. But more than that, the candidate should have been a high-medal-winning exhibitor in the area, published on the subject, be a recognized go-to person in a specialty society, and/or be a dealer in the area to be expertized. If, in their philatelic travels, they have been students of the production processes that made the stamps, then so much the better.

Accomplishments and years of involvement in these areas suggest that the candidate is knowledgeable, careful, owns the tools needed for expertizing most of what is submitted, and has at least the beginnings of a reference collection and library to support examination of material to determine whether items submitted are genuine or not.

There are many collectors who could qualify as experts but who choose not to do it. Why? They realize they don't have the patience or time required. They don't want the responsibility of handling someone else's stamps. Or they don't feel at least 95 percent comfortable with passing judgment on the stamps and covers that they must examine.

With regard to the latter, there are times when an expert does not want to render an opinion, mostly when the stamp or cover poses questions that can't be answered, or because the expert does not feel qualified. In my experience,

The American Philatelic Expertizing Service
P.O. BOX 8000 53946
STATE COLLEGE, PA. 16801

Enclosed herewith for examination is the following item believed to be:

Country UNITED STATES Year Issued 1969
Denomination 10c Color Yellow black blue white
Rose red & CAR-115
☒ Unused o.g. ☐ Unused part o.g. ☐ Used
☐ Unused no gum ☐ Used

Cat. No. C762 Cat. Value \$500.00
(Enter one number only)

Catalogue used Scott's U.S. Spec. Year 1982
(Must be current issue)

Other information CANNOT DETECT RED DOTS
IN FACE MASK & RED DOTS VERY LIGHT EVERYWHERE.

The item submitted has been previously expertized ☐ yes, ☒ no.
If yes, give committee name N/A
certificate number , date

The following information is desired:
WHETHER THIS STAMP IS GENUINE OR
AN ALTERED STAMP - I.E. RED STRIPES
REMOVED

Members of The American Philatelic Expertizing Service have examined the item submitted and it is their opinion that it is
U.S. Scott No. C762, first print with litho red
partly missing. Unusual as to genuine in all respects.

Date JUL 4 5 1984
J.M.H. (APES Authorized Signature)
J.M.H. (ASDA Authorized Signature)

Figure 2. This 1984 certificate notes that the bottom stamp in Figure 1 is not an error, but that it is freak print with the lithographed red partly missing.

that is a relatively unusual occurrence. But when it happens, it usually upsets the owner who would not have submitted the item unless he or she thought it was genuine.

It is not unusual for such items to be resubmitted with additional information, or sent to a different expertizing service in hopes that new sets of eyes will be able to make a determination.

In the legal profession, there is a qualification for candidates for the bench that is called judicial temperament. There is a parallel requirement for expertizers.

The good ones always approach the submitted items with a healthy degree of skepticism. This is not because we want to turn down items, but because we want to be absolutely certain that we have our diagnosis correct. There is so much fakery that has gone on over the 175 years since 1840 — some of it very skillful — that it is simply better to start from "no" and build to a "yes" conclusion, than it is to start from "yes" with an orientation of wanting to prove it.

The latter course can often lead

to insufficiently considered conclusions. It is better to consider all the things that could have been done to make or alter the item we are looking at, and to eliminate them from consideration. This process takes time, but it also eliminates errors. And we all know that, as human beings, we are fallible. The expertizer who forgets that is unreliable.

The bottom-line point here is that expertizers are not picked randomly, do not expertize in a vacuum without supervision or review, render an opinion based on the knowledge and tools available in the moment, recognize — indeed are acutely aware — that they are capable of error, and that there are times when there just is not enough information to reach a decision.

And that is the answer to the question, "Who the heck are you to tell me that my prize acquisition is not genuine?"

Man on the Moon missing red

Having lectured for the first part of this column, let me end it with an example of how an expertizer

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Figure 1. Two examples of the 1969 10c Moon Landing airmail stamp. A normal example is shown at top, and a freak example is shown at bottom. The bottom stamp is not an error because there are still remnants of the rose red lithographed ink present. The normal stamp above shows how the brightness of the paper needs to be taken into account when determining whether missing colors are the result of alteration.

an opinion. It will be as close to the ultimate truth as humans can make it. Often it is around 99 percent.

But other times, it might be and can be questioned by other experts who did not review the item, by people with different viewpoints on the facts, or because of advances in technology. That is why certificates from earlier days are sometimes reversed in the current era, and why some dealers and collectors will not accept

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looks at a modern missing color candidate. The stamp under the 30-power magnifier is the 1969 10¢ Man on the Moon airmail stamp (Scott C76) shown in Figure 1.

It is listed in the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* with the lithographed rose red ink missing, as Scott C76a. It is not common in this form, as evident from the 2014 Scott catalog value of \$500.

The expertizer has three issues to deal with. First, despite a catalog note describing the error, many people see no evidence of red in the astronaut's shoulder patch flag and assume the stamp is the color-missing error.

In fact, there is also rose red shading in the yellow area in the upper left and in the astronaut's face mask. The red "United States" lettering is not part of this discussion, as it was engraved and applied by the intaglio process.

Second, to qualify as a color-missing error, a stamp can have no trace of the color present, and that requires a thorough look at where the color is present on a normal stamp, using a 30-power magnifier.

A single dot of color — even one that is not visible to the naked eye — turns the stamp from an error into a variety of considerably less value; still collectible, of course, but not as an error.

Assuming the stamp passes the no-color test, there is still one more concern. Reds, oranges and

yellows can be bleached out of surface-printed stamps by prolonged exposure to sunlight or powerful artificial light, and sometimes by chemicals. Such alterations, whether purposeful or accidental (for instance, in soaking the stamp off paper), can fool the expert and the collector alike.

This is doubly problematic if the stamp is mint, as light exposure leaves the tagging undisturbed, and disturbed tagging is often a reliable pointer that signals modern material has been altered.

But alteration by light does leave one other telltale sign. It tends to darken the paper the stamp is printed on, so that comparison with a normal example will show the normal to have a bright white background, and the altered stamp to have a darker, even grayish, tinge.

The certificate in Figure 2, dated 1984, has a note from the submitter saying "cannot detect red dots on face mask and red dots very light elsewhere."

The opinion was "U.S. Scott No. C76, freak print with litho red partly missing., unused, og, genuine in all respects."

I would argue that the submitted stamp may well have been altered by light.

The stamp in question is the bottom example of the pair shown in Figure 1. A normal stamp is shown above it. Hopefully, the illustration will show that the top stamp is also brighter. That says to me that this submitted stamp was likely altered. ■

Expertizing subtle color varieties of U.S. 19th-century stamps

Stamp colors are troublesome to the expertizer, but no less so to the collector. Witness this question from *Linn's* reader Todd Hause.

First, he provides a little background: "As a collector of 19th century U.S. stamps, stationery and postal history, one area that has and continues to plague me, perhaps more than any other area of identification, is color.

"I used to think I had a pretty good eye for color and then I started collecting stamps. I now own six or more different color guides that vary in cost from \$10 to \$100 each. To make matters worse, the colors in and between these guides are as varied as the item I seek to identify.

"This leads me to my question. How does an expertizer determine the color of a stamp or envelope?"

I embark on an answer with a large degree of humility, as Hause has identified one of the major problems with which expertizers must deal, and I would not claim infallibility here.

Each stamp is its own problem, and there are no unalterable rules that apply to all United States stamps.

So let's consider the case of a 19th-century problem child that many of us have agonized over. In the next expertizing



Figure 2. Four examples of the variations of the dull red color most often seen on the 3¢ Washington imperforate stamps.

column, I'll look at a 20th-century color problem that poses difficulties.

Comparing a stamp submitted for expertizing — what I've referred to as a patient — to reference examples is a good alternative, but it is also imperfect: For every stamp color, there are usually several gradations.

Further, the human eye is not a reliable gauge, as perception differs somewhat from person to person, even in excellent lighting

Color charts, as Hause indicates, do differ from one another, and are sometimes internally inconsistent.

So what are we to do?

Our 19th-century example is U.S. Scott 10 and 10A, the 3¢ 1851 orange brown stamp on the cover in Figure 1, to be distinguished from Scott 11 and 11A in Figure 2, which is identified in its major listing as dull red, but which also has minor listings of or-

ange red, rose red, brownish carmine, claret, deep claret, plum and pinkish.

How to make sense of that? Well, the first thing to do is to carefully read the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*. If you do that, you will discover that both Types I and II of the orange brown variety were first issued in 1851.

The dull red variety of the Type I stamp, with its inner framelines not recut (Scott 11) was not issued until March 1855. Type II of the dull red variety (11A) was released between 1851 and 1855, depending upon the plate used to produce the stamps.

So, this tells us that Type I imperforate stamps canceled before March 1855 are orange brown.

Considering the issue dates of the Type I stamps, any imperforate associated with an 1851 date is orange brown, and many others with 1852-54 dates could be the orange brown.

If the stamp is on cover, one needs to pay attention to the cancellation date and docketing.

It was the practice in many cases to write the date of receipt on covers, especially if the cover was business mail of some sort.

Off-cover examples will also sometimes carry a year date in the cancellation.

Those who work with these stamps often, including expertizers, spe-

cialists in the issue and stamp dealers, develop the faculty of being able to recognize orange brown in a heartbeat.

For the rest of us, reference examples are a helpful guide, even if not entirely reliable given the fact that there is variation even in the orange browns.

The Scott U.S. specialized catalog, for example, also lists a deep orange brown for both Scott 10 and Scott 10A, and a copper brown variety for Scott 10A, but not Scott 10.

There is also a color chart that is a highly satisfactory aid. It is the *Encyclopedia of Colors of United States Postage Stamps* by R.H. White. There are four volumes that cover U.S. postage stamps from 1847 to 1917, and a fifth volume that covers postage due issues from 1879 to 1916. The color plates are professionally and accurately done, and while there might be some quibbles with the color terminology, this is the best reference that exists for the stamps it covers.

The color plate from White's book addressing Scott 11 is shown in Figure 3.

The book is almost too good in that it lists and illustrates, for example, 10



Figure 3. R.H. White's color plates from his 1981 color encyclopedia, such as this one for Scott 11, are authoritative and essential references for the expertizer of 19th-century U.S. stamps up through the Washington-Franklin series.

different colors of Scott 10, and nine different colors of Scott 11. (The book was published in 1981, before there were separate listings for Scott 10A and 11A.)

An article published with the plates also provides critical information about the dates of appearance of the various colors.

The books were not cheap — more than \$300 when first released — but every expertizer who looks at U.S. 19th century, Washington-Franklins, and early postage dues, needs to have it. It does come up periodically in the stocks of philatelic literature dealers.

Returning to the item pictured in Figure 1, it does not appear to be a particularly desirable cover. The

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Figure 1. This envelope is franked with a pen-canceled imperforate 3¢ George Washington stamp of the 1851 issue. Is it the orange brown stamp, Scott 10 or 10A, or is it the dull red stamp, Scott 11 or 11A?

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cancellation is indistinct. The stamp is cut close and pen canceled. But it has its original letter inside, which matches in salutation the addressee on the envelope, and the letter is clearly dated July 12, 1851.

What makes this cover special is the note on the back in the handwriting of Dr. Carroll Chase (1878-1960), the premier early researcher on the issues of 1851 and 1857: "Fine copy Plate 1E orange brown, red Rockton, NY canc. Dated July 12 (1851) in the cover. Early use."

How early? The earliest known use for this stamp is July 1, 1851.

Now, if I have an example submitted to be expertized as an orange brown, I have several resources at hand: the Scott U.S. specialized catalog, the color plates and write-ups in the *White encyclopedia*, and my own reference collection that includes an example annotated by Chase, the master himself. I also have my experience with handling this stamp over many years, and additional philatelic literature.

And remember that I am going to be only one of three or more experts looking at the submitted stamp and rendering an opinion.

So, to repeat what I have said earlier in this series, expertizers strive to get it right. There are checks and balances built into the system, including multiple informed eyes looking at the patient.

This does not ensure that the final opinion will be right in 100 percent of the cases, but every effort is made to make it so.

Cartoon winner

It does seem I struck a nerve with the cartoon caption contest stamp for June using the 22¢ Public Hospitals commemorative stamp shown in Figure 4. A dozen or so entries submitted were in the class of political statement — mostly without an element of humor. I am glad to have given those readers an opportunity to get their opinions off their chests, but those entries will not be used in this report.

The administrative aspects of health care — especially in the realm of insurance cost and process — was the target of several entries for the June contest. This is nicely typified by "Mr. Smith, have you finished filling out our streamlined 351-page health insurance form? Mr. Smith? Mr. Smith? Oh my goodness, he's dead!" submitted by T. Ryan from

Expertizing colors of the 30¢ Roosevelt Presidential series stamp

In the last expertizing column in *Linn's* July 28 issue, largely devoted to how experts deal with the color problems posed by the 1851-57 3¢ Washington stamps, I promised in this installment to discuss modern-era color problems that challenge the experts.

I have chosen to focus on the 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt stamp (Scott 830) from the 1938-54 Presidential series.

The 2014 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* lists this stamp in three varieties: Scott 830 deep ultramarine valued at \$4 mint, 25¢ used; 830a blue at \$15 mint with no value listed for used condition; and 830b deep blue valued at \$240 mint and no value listed for used.

A value of \$1,000 is also given for Scott 830b as a plate block.

In the course of a year, I probably see between five and 10 requests to certify a 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt stamp or block as deep blue, and most examples do not make the cut.

How does an expertizer reach a conclusion regarding this stamp?

There are several components to the answer: comparison with previously expertized examples; knowledge of the physical properties of the variety and from that, knowledge of what can exist; knowledge of what earlier experts concluded; information that has been provided by the printer, in this case the Bureau of Engraving and Printing; and excellent light in which to make the comparison.

I will look at each of these components with the exception of lighting, which I have talked about in previous columns.

It is essential for the expert to invest in comparison examples of these stamps. As you can proba-



These three plate blocks represent the three listings for the 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt stamp from the Presidential series. Shown from left to right are the deep ultramarine, blue, and deep blue varieties.



The plate blocks from the previous illustration are shown here from the back, illustrating the effect of "bleed-through" that characterizes the blue-colored examples of this stamp. In general, the more bleed-through on the back, the deeper the blue color on the front.



These two stamps were submitted to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1992, resulting in a diagnosis of different papers and of a subtle change in the raw materials used to make the ink.

bly see from the illustration at the top of this page, the blue and deep blue varieties are fairly close in color. Yet to the trained eye, assisted by comparison examples, they are different.

Without comparison examples, it is easy to mistake a blue variety for a deep blue, and even stamps with a tinge of the ultramarine for blue. Single mint stamps for comparison are good. Blocks are better.

Knowledge about the physical properties of stamps and varieties comes from philatelic lit-

erature. In the case of the 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt stamp, *The Prexies* by Roland Rustad, is the best summary of current knowledge. It was published in 1994 by the Bureau Issues Association, now called the United States Stamp Society.

Rustad listed seven shades for this stamp: dark ultramarine, dark blue-ultramarine, blackish ultramarine, deep blue (reddish), blue-bright blue (reddish), bluish ultramarine, and bright ultramarine.

And then he adds insult to injury with this state-

ment: "It is possible to find shades that are between the listed categories."

Rustad does not identify the plates from which the deep blue varieties were printed, but the great majority seem to have come from early plates 22164 and 22165.

I understand that Wal-

lace Cleland also had examples from plates 22833, 22834, 23116 and 23906, but of these, I have seen only examples from 22833 and 23906.

Also, I have seen many stamps from plates 22833, 22834, 23116 and 23906 that were not deep blue. The bottom line is that most of the genuine deep blues are from plates 22164 and 22165.

Rustad does note, "It is a characteristic of these shades [the blues] that the ink seems to 'bleed' through the paper (the stamp design is easily seen from the back), and the bluer the stamp, the more bleed through."

I can confirm that from what I have seen, and the phenomenon is illustrated here.

As for the knowledge that earlier experts have concluded, I have two typewritten pages from George Brett, the dean of U.S. stamp expertizers for material produced by the BEP.

On one of these pages, Brett urges that expertizers "compare the part of a stamp that gives the best approximation to a solid

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A FEW MORE FEET
AND WE'LL BE IN THE
POSTAL MUSEUM'S VAULT!



Emmanuel Atsalinos of Maryland wins one of two prizes in the July cartoon caption contest, with this fanciful line that highlights a situation all stamp collectors might enjoy. The next cartoon caption contest will be announced in *Linn's* Sept. 14 issue.

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print — in this case the back of Roosevelt's head."

On the other, Brett talks about four stamps submitted for expertizing that he reviewed at the same time. He poses the question that plagues the expertizer: When you have several different examples and all are different shades, and given the range of shades noted in Rustad, "Where do you draw the line on a shade?"

He does not claim infallibility, and rendered his opinions case by case, according to what he perceived. That is all we can do.

In 1992, Rustad asked the BEP about two stamps that he provided and which are shown here.

In a long response, the BEP agreed that the stamps were different:

"As examined microscopically, the two stamps are printed on different papers, and the ink thickness of the printed image is different. The reddish [ultramarine] postage stamp image appears to have been printed on paper which is less porous than that upon which the blue image has been printed. The ink thickness appears to be greater on the stamp which appears bluer. On the bluer appearing postage stamp, there is evidence of considerable feathering, i.e., spreading of ink between printed lines."

The BEP also said, "As analyzed by X-Ray fluorescence spectrometry, the ink on the two stamps is composed of pigments and extenders of the same inorganic chemical elements." What then is the difference?

The BEP concluded, "In our opinion the bluer appearing stamp was not a result of using a substitute material for the blue color but was an example of the effects of a variation in raw materials."

The bottom line is this is a case where there are definite guidelines, but

no objective standard except in the eye of the beholder.

So it should not come as a surprise that experts sometimes do not agree, and debate ensues until a decision can be reached.

In my view, the deep blue variety is distinctive, but many stamps approach this shade without reaching the mark.

Unfortunately, almost all 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt stamps are submitted as being the hoped-for deep blue, so there are many disappointed submitters.

To put this in context, the Presidential series lasted for about 20 years. In that period, virtually all the single color Prexies show a wide range of shades, usually from warm darkish colors to lighter, crisper prints.

Several of these varieties even receive minor listings in the Scott U.S. specialized catalog, but no others get a letter-listing like the 30¢ does, and none show the kind of price disparity between routine and variety that the 30¢ does.

For that reason I have never seen another single-color Prexie stamp submitted for authentication as a cataloged variety.

Your expertizing questions welcome

The bread and butter of this column are your questions and experiences with expertizing. If you would like to pose a question or have puzzling experiences in need of some enlightenment, please contact me by e-mail at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or by mail at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041.

Cartoon winner

No doubt there is much justified angst in the stamp collecting community over self-adhesive stamps that won't soak. Several entries in the July cartoon caption contest emphasized this problem.

The contest featured the

Expertizing stamps that have been altered to fake an error

In an earlier column on expertizing, I discussed colors that can be removed to create faked errors. I received some disbelieving feedback, so this column includes two examples of artificially removed yellow to prove my point that expertizing is needed. Another two examples will look at missing red, and altered paper color.

The first example is shown through the courtesy of fellow *Linn's* columnist Tony Wawrukiewicz, who found the cover at the recent American Philatelic Society Stampshow in Hartford, Conn.

The cover, which is shown here graphically cropped, is franked with a vertical strip of three non-denominated (20¢) G-rate Old Glory postcard stamps (Scott 2879) affixed horizontally. These stamps are distinguished from the first-class letter rate 32¢ G-rate Old Glory stamps (2881) primarily by a yellow background.

The strip has the yellow background on the top stamp and most of the middle stamp. However, it disappears below the words "Postcard Rate" at the bottom of that middle stamp. The bottom



Shown side-by-side are a normal example of the 8¢ Copernicus commemorative (left) and one that has been altered to remove the yellow-orange sun.

stamp has no yellow at all.

A collector might easily conclude that the press ran out of ink in the midst of the print run. But if the cover is held to the light just so, it is possible to see some discoloration of the right side of the cover that matches to the point where the yellow disappears. There are also some anomalies under ultraviolet light.

There is no listing in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* for a missing yellow error for the G-rate Old Glory postcard stamp, and that should serve as a clue. It is possible that a true error could turn up years after issue, but this stamp is nearly 20 years old, so it is not likely. Any example submitted for expertizing has to be looked upon skeptically.

Even older is the 8¢ Copernicus commemorative of 1973, which is known with the yellow-orange color missing from the sun at the center of the heliocentric model held by the scientist in the stamp design. The variety is listed in the Scott U.S. specialized catalog as Scott 1488a, with a value of \$650.

Shown here side-by-side are two examples of the stamp. On the left is a normal example, and on the right is one without the yellow-orange. The missing color stamp is a fake.

The Scott catalog listing notes: "The orange can be chemically removed. Expertization of No. 1488a is required."

The Scott *Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps* by Stephen R. Datz goes further: "Caution. Extremely dangerous fakes, including color changelings exist. Genuine examples of this error each have an APS certificate. Expert certificate absolutely essential. Examples without certificates should be avoided."

No, I am not going to describe how to remove the yellow-orange. Suffice it to say that the lithographed color can be chemically removed, and if carefully done, it is very hard to detect.

Staff members of Jacques C. Schiff Jr. Inc., the now-closed New Jersey auction house, demonstrated the method to managers at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in October 1973. The BEP managers were taken by surprise.

This is one of many cases where an expertizer needs not just genuine examples of the normal stamp, but also fakes for comparison. Verified fakes are often not easy to come by, but over the years, expertizers are well advised to add them whenever possible.

No stamp dealer can know everything about everything. And for that reason, both identified and unidentified fakes can sometimes be found in dealer stocks. Some will not be cheap, but they are extremely helpful to an expertizer, and usually worth the asking price when building a serious reference collection.

Missing red

A particularly troublesome stamp to expertize is the 10¢ Contributors to the Cause commemorative honoring Haym Salomon (Scott 1561). Examples that seem to be missing the red are shown here, along with a normal stamp.

While there once was a listing for a red-omitted error of this stamp in the Scott U.S. specialized catalog (Scott 1561b), that listing was removed because old opinions validating the missing red were found to be wrong.

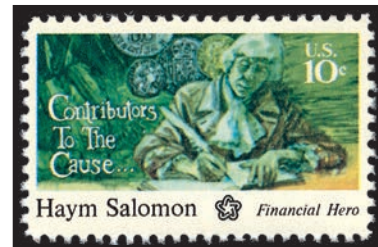
This and some of the early certified 8¢ Copernicus stamps missing yellow-orange are examples of how old certificates can be wrong, and why, as the art of detection improves, a contemporary certificate is preferred.

There is red throughout the Salomon design. Under 30-power magnification it is visible, but it helps to have a normal example handy to see where to look.

I have two examples expertized in the mid-1990s that say "freak
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A strip of three G-rate postcard stamps with yellow background, graphically cropped from a cover. The bottom stamp does not have any yellow, and the middle stamp is missing some yellow at the bottom.



These 10¢ Haym Salomon commemoratives have red as an important but difficult to see part of the design. At bottom is a normal example. In the center is one that is genuine, but with much of the red omitted. At top is an altered copy with no red, but the paper is toned.

U.S. STAMP NOTES

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print with most of red missing" and "freak printing, light print of red."

Both descriptions mean essentially the same thing, but one stamp has a good deal more red visible to the naked eye, while the other requires magnification to see. I would like to see some sort of standard phraseology for such situations.

Complicating this situation is the fact that man-made alterations of the red are what one mostly sees. They are most obvious when compared to a normal example, because the bright white margins have been dulled by whatever was used to remove the red.

Blue paper turns white

The altering of stamp paper color is not limited to white. A final example is demonstrated with a pair



Some Americana definitives from 1975 to 1979 were printed on blue paper. The blue paper (top) can be turned to white (bottom) with a common household product.

of plate blocks of U.S. stamps.

The 24¢, 28¢, 29¢ and 30¢ stamps in the 1975-81 Americana series were printed on blue paper (Scott 1603-1606). Shortly after issue, they began showing up as white-paper examples.



moving the blue from the paper.

As far as I am aware, all known examples showing this effect are used or unused without gum, as there is no way to do this without removing the gum. Still, I marvel that some were sent in for expertizing and others are seen in dealer stocks, usually with question marks.

If any part of a print run of these stamps was done on white paper and not announced, there would have been a considerable stir in the collecting community. Believing that such a thing could exist would represent a triumph of hope over reality.

In next month's expertizing column, I will look at more instances of common submissions of material believed to be in the error class that do not make the grade. The focus will be on perforations. ■

The value of observation in expertizing: Is it real or fake?

I am often asked if such-and-such an item should be submitted for expertizing. The default answer is "yes," but there are three general exceptions.

The first is when the cost of expertizing is more — often far more — than the value of the item, although that is not an absolute rule. The scholar who needs to verify his opinion for his study might find the cost of a certificate worthwhile.

Even cheap stamps have been faked, especially when overprinted or surcharged.

A few philatelists seem to collect certificates with as much passion as they collect stamps. Value to them is not the most im-

portant factor: assuring that their stamps are genuine and unaltered is.

portant factor: assuring that their stamps are genuine and unaltered is. The third "do not submit" category represents material discussed in this column and in the next: philatelic items that can be eliminated as being genuine through observation by anyone with a bit of knowledge, a magnifier, an up-to-date catalog and a logical mind.

I was asked recently about submitting a vertical strip of three of the United States 8¢ Rural America Angus Cattle stamp (Scott 1504). The stamps on the strip, pictured here, each have two sets of horizontal perforations.

The owner — an error,



The stamps on this seemingly double-perforated strip of 1973 commemoratives were altered by the addition of a second row of horizontal perfs beneath the "Rural America" inscription.

portant factor: assuring that their stamps are genuine and unaltered is.

Since we all get to collect however we wish, I have no problem with this.

The second exception is when the item is evidently what it seems to be.

Stamps that fit into this class, when being looked at by any reasonably experienced collector, include the United States 1847 5¢ and 10¢ stamps (Scott 1 and 2), and Great Britain's 1840 Penny Black (1).

Expertizing might still be desired if the owner wants to know about possible defects, plating or minor

freak and oddity collector — can be forgiven for hoping that this is a genuine variety, as there are genuine double perfs in one direction known on some of the stamps perforated on the sheetfed L-perforator during the 1960s and 1970s. But this is not one of them.

What is the tip-off? The perforations under the words "Rural America" are smaller than the genuine perforations above the words. The second set of perfs was added after production, and the piece is nothing but a curiosity.

Such a small difference can escape notice when



What appear to be perforations on this strip of three 1¢ Liberty issue George Washington coil stamps actually are punctures created by teeth that held the coil roll in place in a coil dispensing machine.

hope overcomes reason.

A similar item is shown here, graphically cropped: a 1¢ Liberty series George Washington coil strip (Scott 1054), on cover with doubled vertical perforations. In this case, the second set of perforations (within the stamp design) is a bit ragged and is, again, smaller than the genuine perforations.

The origin of this effect is a coil dispensing machine set to dispense stamps one at a time. Insert a penny, and one stamp comes out. Teeth clamp down on the next stamp to prevent the buyer from getting anything more than what was paid for.

In this case, those teeth are of the same gauge as the genuine perforations, and create puncture holes that match up pretty well.

Also shown graphically cropped from its cover is an apparent imperforate single of the 1941 6¢ Transport airmail stamp (Scott C25).

The stamp has decent margins, but it is a nearly inviolable rule in expertizing that one never gives a good certificate to single imperfs. In this case, there is a really good reason.

This design was also

released in the form of a three-stamp vertical booklet pane. The bottom stamp of that pane has no perforations at right, left or bottom.

Cut the perforations off the top and you have an instant, though quite faked, imperforate stamp.



Graphically cropped from a cover, this seemingly imperforate 1941 6¢ Transport stamp was clipped from a booklet pane.

This phenomenon is often seen with early U.S. stamps where the settings for the lines of perforating pins were variable, causing the occasional jumbo stamp, such as the 2¢ margin single shown nearby. Cut off the perforations, and you have what appears to be a credible imperf single, such as the 3¢ stamp next to it.

Also shown is a pair of stamps from a 1938 3¢ Prexie booklet pane. You will see that the lower left stamp from the booklet

pane of six is off both high and to the right. And you can picture someone clipping just inside the perforations, together with the straight edges at left and bottom, leaving what would appear to be a nice imperforate single with quite large margins.

The bottom line is, beware of the good-looking imperforate single.

Covers can also be subjected to the logical approach. An example is the cover canceled in Cape Verde Dec. 28, 1901, and sent without postage. On arrival in New York in January 1902, it was rated 10¢ postage due and sent on-

ward to the addressee in Providence, R.I.

On arrival, the 10¢ was collected as the letter was delivered, and evidence thereof was affixed to the front of the letter.

The problem with this cover is that the evidence affixed is not the stamp now seen on the cover. Likely it was a plain old 10¢ postage due stamp affixed where the 10¢ parcel post postage due stamp is now.

How can I be so sure? The parcel post postage

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Raw material for faked single imperforate stamps, like the 3¢ Bank Note stamp shown on the left, can be from jumbo perforated examples such as the 2¢ stamp, or from widely perforated booklet-pane singles.

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due stamps were issued in 1913 to complement the parcel post stamps released that same year for the new fourth class services approved by Congress in 1912.

cover shown here, which is genuine enough in its basics, fails logical examination because the stamp on it was not issued until 1913.

The owner need not bother submitting it for an expert opinion.



What is it about this 1901 cover that has been faked? The answer appears in the accompanying article.

The five-stamp parcel post postage due set consists of 1¢, 2¢, 5¢, 10¢ and 25¢ denominations. The aggregate value for used examples in the 2015 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* is \$77, with the 10¢ stamp being the most desirable, at \$45.

But the same stamps used on cover are much more difficult to find, and much more pricey than the value for the used stamp off cover.

That 10¢ denomination on cover catalogs at \$650.

That value difference is quite an incentive to create a fake rarity. But the 1901

In the next column in this expertizing series, we will look at more examples of stamps that have no prayer of getting a genuine certificate.

Cartoon winner

Picture yourself looking out over the water from the top of a lighthouse, such as the structure shown on the Portland Head Lighthouse stamp issued as part of the 2013 New England Coastal Lighthouses set.

That particular stamp was used for the September cartoon caption contest.

Of the hundred or so readers who took the challenge, some remarkably

Save some bucks on expertizing by eliminating obvious alterations

In the previous column in this U.S. Stamp Notes series on expertizing (*Linn's*, Oct. 27, page 6), I looked at some of the patients (stamps) sent in for expertizing where the submitter could have saved themselves the fee through their own careful observation.

Granted, someone new

writing a check for expertizing. Often members will be able to save you the fee.

They also can tell you if they think it's worthwhile to send the item in.

Today, I will discuss items recently sent in for authentication that need not have been expertizing candidates.

vast majority of the Hat stamps, the hat brim is gray, but once in a while you will see a stamp that has a green hat brim.

Is it a rare and valuable error?

We know that color errors are listed in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*, but checking there reveals no listing for a green hat brim error.

This is the first clue that it's time to tone down the enthusiasm level.

If something that is found 15 to 20 years after it's issued is not in the catalog, there is a very high probability that it is not a genuine error, or that the variety itself is not of sufficient significance to be listed.

In the case of the Hat variety, it is a post-production changeling. The gray color is a composite of various pigments, and something in the ink responds to prolonged exposure to bright light by morphing the visual color from gray to green.

Put it in your album as an interesting variety, but don't send it for expertizing as an error.

A similar variety affects some U.S. stamps of the late 19th and early 20th centuries printed in orange and sometimes yellow ink.

Four examples shown here have changed from those colors to variants ranging from chocolate brown to orange brown.

These are not errors, but rather, the result of sulfuration from chemicals in the air.

Such changes are often found in varying degrees on the 1898 4¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp, the 6¢ Washington of the Third Bureau issue, the 6¢ Garfield of the 1922 series, and the 2¢ orange revenue stamps of 1862-71.

If not too far gone, the darkening effect can be reversed by carefully applying a little bit of hydrogen peroxide diluted in water. Before you try this on mint



Striking color varieties such as these have been created on purpose by collectors drawn to experimenting with chemicals to see what effect they might have on stamps. Some are identified as experiments on the back of the stamp, and others are not.

have been intentionally altered to create visually arresting varieties.

Sometimes these intentional experiments will be marked on the back as being chemically transformed, but not always.

There is another resource for determining whether you have a stamp worth expertizing. The American Philatelic Society has a "Quick I.D."

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On the left is the 1998 nondenominated H-rate (33¢) Hat stamp, as issued, with its normal gray hat brim. On the right is a variety with a green hat brim that is sometimes thought to be an error — but it is not.

to the hobby might not have the knowledge to be able to see the obvious, but this is where your local stamp club can be a resource.

If there is a stamp club near you, join it. In addition to the enjoyment of fellowship and new sources of stamps for your collection, the amount of knowledge that is available from other members will amaze you.

Take your question-mark stamps to the club before



Some orange and yellow U.S. stamps from the Civil War until the 1930s have changed from their original colors to variations of brown and orange brown. They have been affected by sulphur in the air.



David Schwartz wins one of two prizes in the October cartoon caption contest with this line that seems to predict the future. Daffy Duck was only one of the characters featured on five stamps in the Looney Tunes series issued from 1997 to 2001. The next cartoon caption contest will be announced in *Linn's* Dec. 8 issue.

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service that can often identify the sorts of items discussed in this and prior columns, at a substantially lower cost than the formal expertizing process. It is open to APS members at \$5 per scanned item and \$10 for nonmembers.

The collector provides a digital scan of each item to be identified, and sends it to Quick I.D. as a GIF or JPG digital file.

Or a good quality color photocopy of the item can be submitted with payment to APS Quick I.D., 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte, PA 16823.

For additional information, visit <http://stamps.org/stamp-identification>, or contact Mercer Bristow by e-mail at ambristo@stamps.org, or by telephone at 814-933-3803.

One more easy-to-spot variety that is not genuine is from the era of lick-and-stick stamps, specifically with coil stamps from rolls that were subjected to moisture. The result is a roll that is stuck together, resembling a small brick.

Since such a roll of stamps with higher face values represents a significant amount of money, owners will often try to pull them apart. They would do better to soak them apart, because pulling them apart results in stamps that look like the stamps shown here.

This is because the bond of the paper on which stamps are printed is weaker than the bond created by the moistened gum. When



Seen from the front and the back, these pairs are the result of trying to pull apart lick-and-stick stamp coil rolls that were affected by moisture, causing the stamps to stick together like a small brick. Such items have been submitted for expertization as errors, but they are merely damaged stamps.

the stuck stamps are pulled apart, it leaves part of the paper with gum above the design, and the stamps are so thin when looked at from the back that they seem to be printed in reverse on the back. This is easily mistaken for some sort of rarity.

In fact, they are just damaged stamps with no value, since they will not even pass for postage. There is no point in spending money to have them expertized.

I intend to revisit the matter of varieties that are not genuine at some point down the line, but December's expertizing column will deal with at least a couple of Christmas stamp color misregistrations that mimic missing colors.

In January, we will look at the question raised by a reader of when it makes financial sense to pay for the cost of expertizing something that appears to be a genuine stamp or variety.

Cartoon winner

Daffy Duck wasn't the first duck on a U.S. stamp, but he is clearly the duck with the most personality — at least to us humans.

Daffy appeared on the 1999 33¢ stamp that also served as the October cartoon caption contest stamp.

As several entries pointed out, the 20¢ 1982 issue that marked the 50th anniversary of migratory bird hunting stamps was the first postage stamp to feature ducks.

That postage stamp commemorated the federal duck stamp program that began in 1932, and which produces a large and attractive revenue stamp each year featuring competitively selected duck art for the stamps that are used on that year's hunting licenses.

Many U.S. collectors are not aware of these beautiful

stamps, but they are avidly collected by those who appreciate the beauty of the basic art, and the engraving of the earlier issues.

William Meentemeyer of Sarasota, Fla., recognizes this with this entry, "I'm proud to be the most famous duck, but for 80 years they've pictured all my brothers and sisters!"

Steve Kotler of San Francisco, Calif., gives this a somewhat different treatment with, "They finally picked the right duck, but I should have been on a forever stamp!"

The great majority of entries this month talked about the contents of the unusual mailbox.

Adapting a favorite exclamation that Daffy sometimes borrowed from Sylvester the cat, Paul Abajian of Essex Junction, Vt., has him saying "Coupons, coupons, coupons, but nothing for succotash!"

And in a nod to *Linn's*, Dieter Von Hennig of Reno, Nev., comments, "What? No *Linn's* again? I better try the digital edition."

The nonphilatelic winner comes from this group. Grieg Best of Sacramento, Calif., has Daffy musing,



The first in an unbroken line of federal migratory bird hunting stamps that dates from 1934 to the present, these large revenue stamps for hunting licenses are notable for their beauty and high quality printing.

Missing colors on Christmas stamps fool even the experts

There are some colors that have been used in stamp printing that are virtually impossible to see.

I've previously written about the United States 1968 6¢ Christmas stamp featuring *The Annunciation* by Van Eyck (Scott 1363) and the difficulty of determining whether the yellow is missing. The one reliable

of a plate number and the extreme difficulty of seeing the gray color in the design.

And as late as 2010 and 2012, the American Philatelic Society Expertizing Service has received patients (stamps) that have come through claiming to be the missing gray. They were even accompanied by letters from the Bureau

any stamp when it is part of a multicolor printing. In this case, it is on top of the yellow and red, but under the blue, dark green and black.

On both the normal and the misregistered blocks, the gray can be seen under magnification on the upper part of the bird's head.

Thus, despite the evidence of your unaided

cate strongly advised. Many prefer to collect this error in intact pane form because the omission of buff is more readily evident due to the absence of the buff plate

number in the selvage."

However, I have seen half a dozen full strips of 20, such as the example shown here, with the buff

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This plate block of the 1971 8¢ Christmas stamp has a missing gray plate number, fourth from the left. This has led to widespread misidentification of stamps as missing the difficult-to-see gray color.

clue is having a plate strip with the yellow number missing.

But what if a plate number is missing, and the color isn't missing on the stamp? There are two instances of U.S. Christmas stamps where this has happened.

The first is the 1971 8¢ Partridge in a Pear Tree (Scott 1445), shown here in a plate block of 12.

If you look at the place for the fourth plate number from the left, you will see that it is blank. I have seen about half a dozen such blocks, both lower right and lower left, with the gray number (33108) missing.

I also have seen 1973, 1985 and 2001 certificates from major expertizing services saying that the stamps are missing-gray errors, based on the lack

of Engraving and Printing and from Scott Publishing arguing for their being genuine.

Yet neither the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* nor the Scott *Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps* by Stephen R. Datz (sometimes referred to as the Datz error catalog) has a listing for missing gray on this stamp, and there is a very good reason for that.

The gray is present, but very hard to see.

On the affected blocks, the gray is shifted up 7½ millimeters. You can see the shifted plate number under magnification in the bottom portion of the pear and across the lower loop of the "8."

Gray is difficult to see in

eyes, good certificates in the past, and letters written in good faith by knowledgeable parties attesting to the missing gray, there is no known example of such an error.

It is a fine example of why it pays for expertizers to be skeptics.

The second example is the 1974 10¢ Currier and Ives Christmas stamp listed as buff omitted (Scott 1551a). As with gray in the Partridge in a Pear Tree stamp, buff is a terribly difficult color to see on the issued stamp, and I have seen only one expertized single.

Datz warns: "Caution. The buff color is a very light, transparent shade. Error stamps are extremely difficult to distinguish from normal stamps. Expert certi-



This 1974 Currier and Ives strip of 20 features two badly misregistered buff plate numbers adjoining horizontal rows nine and 10. Because of the faint coloration, the numbers 35420 may be difficult to see here. Stamps thought to be missing the buff color of the shifted plate number may be nothing more than color misregistrations, despite the fact that there is a catalog listing for a buff-omitted error.

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number missing at the margin of the first horizontal row, but present elsewhere in the margin — not just once, but twice.

Plate number 35420, which should be next to the top stamp, has been shifted 9.02 inches down, next to the Mr. ZIP on row 10. The same plate number also appears next to stamp nine, shifted up 9.02 inches from its proper location in the pane below.

This probably resulted from misregistration at press start-up, or a splice throwing off the color registration process. The light color made it tough to detect the variety during inspection. The bottom line is that the listed missing light buff may not exist at all.

Is it any wonder that expertizers get gray hair?

What's on the minds of Linn's readers about expertizing?

I'm enjoying the questions that have been coming in from *Linn's* readers regarding various facets of expertizing United States and other stamps.

We'll look at a few of these questions in this column and at others in future columns in this series.

I welcome more questions. They can be sent to me by e-mail at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or via postal mail at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125.

Archie McKee asks, "What constitutes a variety?"

He amplifies this question with: "I am working on a project using the R8 set of the Peoples' Republic of China concerning color. My problem is I am trying to look at what I am/was calling color varieties. But what qualifies? Observable color? Different ink composition? What do you call a faded stamp for instance? They certainly show color differences to the eye, to analytical de-

vices, etc. Is this even a minor variety?"

This is an important question because precise definitions matter.

In the broadest terms, a "variety" is anything that departs from the normal. But as a philatelic term, a "variety" is a stamp that departs from the normal because of something that occurred back in the production process. It might be something intentional or unintentional.

If a color is changed after production — for example, due to contact with a chemical in water used to soak a used stamp from an envelope, or due to prolonged exposure of a mint stamp to light — it is an alteration and does not qualify as a philatelic variety.

If submitted for expertizing, such a stamp will be returned with a certificate stating the stamp was altered, meaning that the change occurred after the stamp was produced.

This matters because production varieties often have additional value, which can range from rari-



Shown are three different shades of the 1938 8¢ Martin Van Buren stamp, all printed by plate number 24302, first sent to press in 1953. They illustrate some of the many color varieties that can be found on Presidential series stamps that were current from 1938 until the mid-1950s.

ties such as the 1918 24¢ Jenny Invert airmail error (Scott C3a) at one end of the spectrum, to stamps such as those shown nearby at the other end of the spectrum.

The latter varieties are so minor that they do not receive catalog recognition. Note I did not say they are common. In fact, they are anything but common. The problem, value-wise, is that despite being rather scarce, they are not of interest to many collectors, and the prices for them reflect that.

So, to state it in a different way, in general terms, a variety is any variation from normal regardless of cause or effect, while in philatelic terms, a variety has to have a production-related cause and explanation.

This doesn't mean that alterations can't or shouldn't be collected. To my mind, they are attractive both visually and as a puzzle to be solved.

Including them on extra pages with a few notes about what they are makes an album more interesting, especially if there are some genuine EFOs (errors, freaks and oddities) as well.

In fact, the difference between EFOs and altera-

tions can be a subject for debate, and expertizing can be a useful tool to get the matter sorted out.

A lighter color or one that appears washed out, for example, might have a production cause, such as too little ink on the press, or it might be an alteration.

Without subjecting the stamp to comparison with known normals using expensive technology, the best we can do sometimes is an educated guess.

For common stamps that have low catalog values, it would not seem to be worth the cost of such analysis, unless the reviewer is conducting a scholarly study.

A related question comes from Leila Wadington. She refers to an earlier column in this series (*Linn's*, Aug. 25, 2014) that showed two 30¢ Presidential series plate blocks, with the stamps in one block having a significantly different blue color than the other.

Wadington asks, "Since both blocks have plate number 22165, how can they be different colors?"

The answer is that plate 22165 of the 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt stamp (Scott 830) was used to produce nearly 100,000 sheets of 400 stamps starting in

1938 through 1944.

Ink batches for all the Presidential stamps changed over the life of the series from 1938 to 1954. Thus, the same plate number may be found with many different shades.

An example from a different Prexy stamp, the 8¢ Martin Van Buren (Scott 813), is shown nearby.

The Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* does not give any of these color varieties a major listing. Rather, the catalog gives olive green as the intended color, and notes the existence of these colors as variations: light olive green (1943), bright olive green, and olive (1942).

The illustrated 8¢ stamps all come from the same plate, 24302, but this plate was not sent to press until 1953, and stamps printed from earlier plates show a wider variety of color varieties, as noted in the Scott catalog.

Our final question for this column is from Alex Kaplan: "When is it worthwhile to expertize? Is there a threshold where it becomes economically feasible?"

I would replace "feasible" with "essential."

The answer varies for
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There are a great many inexpensive varieties to be found on United States stamps. These examples are scarce but do not get Scott listings and do not generate much interest from collectors.

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each collector and the reason why a certificate is wanted.

In general, for most of us there are two major reasons to apply to get a good certificate.

One is to be certain that the stamp we have or are considering buying is what we think or hope it is, and the certificate allows us to buy with confidence and put the stamp in the right box in our album.

The second reason is that we are considering selling the stamp and believe that with a certificate the stamp will be more salable and draw a higher price.

In fact, some stamps are not salable at any price close to their catalog value without a certificate. The scarcer U.S. 19th-century grill issues fall into this area.

One answer to Kaplan's question is the following formula for justifying expertizing: Is the projected selling price of the expertized genuine stamp higher than the selling price of the unexpertized stamp by more than the cost of expertizing?

Unfortunately, while the formula is easy the calculation is not because of the variables. These include the difficulty of predicting selling prices (which includes assessing the impact of any faults the

stamp might have), and the possibility of a negative certificate.

There are huge numbers of inexpensive stamps that would never be expertized if the financial consideration were paramount. But I see a fair number of inexpensive stamps being submitted. I have to believe that a lot of collectors really care about proper identification, regardless of value.

The bottom line is that there is no clear cut answer to Kaplan's question covering every stamp.

Each of us makes our own judgment on each stamp being considered, for our own reasons.

For those interested in EFO collecting, including the type of material shown in this column, I recommend the EFO Collectors' Club, which publishes a first-class quarterly journal, the *EFO Collector*, and has an excellent website at www.efocc.org. For more information, contact EFO-CC Secretary Scott Shaulis, Box 549, Murrysville, PA 15668-0549.

Cartoon winner

At 75, Batman may have lost a little of his zip, but his popularity is undiminished. The U.S. Postal Service has capitalized on that with the pane of 20 Forev-

er stamps that was issued Oct. 9, 2014.

One of the eight different Batman stamps from the pane was used in the December 2014 cartoon caption contest, and there were two major themes used in the entries.

The most popular theme, by a wide margin, is unhappiness with the Postal Service stretching the issue to eight different designs.

Steve Kotler of San Francisco, Calif., captures this theme: "Of course these stamps are self-adhesive. How else to better stick it to the public?"

The second theme relates to Batman slowing down as he ages. Michael Moticha, from Apple Valley, Calif., expressed it as, "This 24/7 work at my age should be prohibited by some sort of labor law!"

Walter Robidoux from Smyrna, Ga., was more direct with his entry, "Now What?!!" This entry also takes the prize as the non-philatelic winner.

On the philatelic side, the winner is "Zing Pow Pesky Penguin must be perpetrating a re-perf!" by Tom and Laura Tomaszek of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Both winners will receive *Linn's Stamp Identifier* published by Amos Hobby



Linn's reader Walter Robidoux wins one of two prizes in the December U.S. Stamp Notes cartoon caption contest for a 2014 Batman forever stamp with this nonphilatelic line reflecting 75 years of crime fighting and still more to go. The next cartoon caption contest will be announced in Linn's Feb. 9 issue.

Publishing, or a 13-week subscription to *Linn's* (a new subscription or an extension). The book has a retail value of \$12.99.

Here are the best of the runners-up:

"Oh no! The Joker's about to postmark me again!" from Mike Lantz of Niles, Ohio.

"If it's self-adhesive, it'll be there forever," by Richard and Theresa Dojs from Missouri City, Texas.

"Disposed of the Joker ... now to get to the stamp show," sent by Mark Gereb from Fort Lee, N.J.

"Babe Ruth, now there was a great Bat Man!" from John Shue of Forestville, Md.

"That reminds me, I need to spend some time with my socked-on-the-nose collection," by David Schwartz of Commack, N.Y.

"Can anyone use the extra 12 stamps now that I've made my FDC," sent by Jeff Vogel of New York, N.Y.

Thanks and a tip of the hat to all who entered.

The next cartoon caption contest will be announced in the Feb. 9 issue of *Linn's*. ■

Linn.com

Readers share their thoughts, questions on expertizing

Since the objective of this column is to help collectors better understand expertizing and how and when to use expertization services, I am continuing last month's journey (*Linn's*, Jan. 26) into readers' questions and observations.

I'll start with an issue that is whispered about but seldom dealt with in a public forum.

Dwight Pedersen sent the following: "There are a number of auction companies who (knowingly?) misdescribe what they are offering. I have a good feel for who they are, and when I deal with those companies I will have expertized what I buy and return items to them if they are not what they described. This always means I am out the cost of expertizing/postage and time when I get a bad certificate."

"This has happened twice from a particular firm, and in the future I won't buy from them, but what about all of the other unsuspecting collectors that could be buying something different than what is described? At what point is it criminal fraud, and why do we turn a blind eye to what they are doing? Maybe we should push for the ASDA [American Stamp Dealers Association] and APS [American Philatelic Society] to require members to reimburse the buyer for expertizing fees when the buyer gets a bad cert. [certificate]."

Others have written about the same problem, and have noted that they have seen a returned lot with a bad certificate relisted as before in a following auction, with no mention of the bad certificate.

While I believe the great majority of auction firms are honest, I concede that there are a few bad apples in this barrel, and have some thoughts on what to do about it. All of these

thoughts are predicated on the premise that we can't turn a blind eye. Those who have been stung, need to be activists.

There are auctioneers who absorb the cost of a negative certificate, but certainly not all do so. If this is a deal breaker for you, read the terms and

for the imper is \$3,750.

When this stamp was offered at auction, the value was \$1,800. My guess is that the lot describer relied on the identification of the owner, plus the fact that there are two good margins. In other words, this was not a purposeful attempt at fraud.

The lot was sold, and put "on extension" by the buyer, and sent into the APS for expertization. It came back with a certificate that stated, "United States, Scott No. R97c, altered with perforations trimmed off."

Some auction houses will have enough expertise on staff to be able to spot most fakes and alterations at 50 paces, but even here, don't expect 100 percent accuracy.

That is why anything — whether stamp or cover — highly suspect as a fake, undescribed alteration, or misdescribed as something it is not, should be reported to the auction house. Most will withdraw suspect items for review and listing in a subsequent auction if it is found right and proper.

If not, a corrected listing might be done, or more likely, the item will go back to the seller. Of course, the seller may just try another auction firm.

If presented with a bad certificate on an item, an auction house, on occasion, may toss the certificate and relist the item, their defense being that they are experienced and don't agree with those who have examined the item and found it bad. Personally, I think that if the owner insists on selling it, the proper thing for the auction house to do is to relist it noting the bad certificate and saying that the auction house disagrees.

Under no circumstances should there be a subsequent listing with no mention of the bad certificate.

If we as buyers see that happening, the specifics should be reported to whatever professional groups the auctioneer is a member of, be it the APS, the ASDA or the National Stamp Dealers Association.

Such an action should be considered as a violation of their codes of ethics, and a recorded history of such activity could even be the basis of a report to the state consumer protection authorities where the business is incorporated.

If an auctioneer does not include in the advertising or in their catalogs that they are a member of the professional associations, then you should think long and hard about dealing with that auctioneer no matter how tempting the material they have on offer.

You can also check with the professional organizations. They will tell you if a firm has been expelled.

Reversals

Sean Kennedy asks about how often expertizing houses reverse opinions from fake to genuine, and vice versa. The answer is seldom, but it does happen, especially in two instances.

The first instance is an old certificate. The definition of "old" is open to discussion, but certainly anything certificated prior to the 1980s ought to be considered for resubmission. The knowledge of what to look for and the equipment available to examine stamps and covers have improved markedly. For that reason, it is not unusual for old certificates to be reversed. It happens enough that many collectors want a post-1990s certificate on anything they buy.

The second instance is when the owner submits new information. This can be helpful to the experts

because they nearly always err on the side of the negative in the absence of certainty, resulting in a bad certificate or one that is "no opinion."

Also, owners can contest a recently received negative certificate if they have new information that the experts can consider. This information may relate to the provenance of the item, which helps to establish its bona fides, or may be the result of the owner's research that helps to establish that the item is genuine.

Related to reversal is "certificate shopping," a situation in which the owner does not like an opinion, hopes or believes it is wrong, and submits the item to another expertizing group. When this is done, the prior opinion usually is not mentioned.

This strategy has a high percentage of failure. Much more often than not, they will get the same opinion regardless of which expertizing group they use.

Black Red Cross

Christopher Perry asks a question about the 1931 2¢ Red Cross stamp (Scott 702). He has a single and a block that "have the red cross in a darker shade than the normal bright red."

He said: "The color might be called dark red or brownish red or maybe lake ... It is a variety that is not listed in the Scott catalogue."

A plate block with this variety is shown on page 32.

Is this something that would benefit from being expertized? The short answer is no. It isn't a color difference caused by a change in the ink used to print the stamps. That is the criterion for a major listing.

In this instance, the red cross seems to have been

Continued on page 32



Sold at auction as the scarce imperf \$15 mortgage revenue, this example was sent in for expertization and received a bad certificate as having had its "perforations trimmed off."

conditions of sale very carefully; something you should do anyway. They will specify the auctioneer's policies. I think it is fair to say that in virtually every instance, if the item comes back with a good certificate, the buyer bears the cost.

As to how bad items get listed in the first place, it can be because no auctioneer, and their staff, know everything about everything. Some will take the word of the seller. Others will simply make an educated guess. Both believe in "buyer beware."

A likely example of the latter is the \$15 mortgage revenue (Scott R97a) shown nearby. The 2015 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* value-



The red cross on this 1931 bicolor commemorative can be found in multiple shades, caused most probably by contamination of the red ink by the black ink used to print the rest of the design.

Continued from page 6
contaminated by the black ink used to print the frame, or basic design.

Max Johl in his monumental *The United States Commemorative Stamps of the 20th Century* (Vol I, 1901-1935), published in 1947, notes a range of varieties.

Johl lists shades of the cross as carmine rose, carmine lake, and lake, but does not explain what happened to cause the unusual colors.

In my experience, the odd colors are a minority of the total production, but by no means rare. Though a nice addition to a collection, I wonder if they might

for our worn-out trucks

shouldn't be a surprise."

The subject of speed paired with the performance of the Congress inspired several entries, such as "Hurry up, Bessie, Congress is moving faster than us ..." by Fred Breier of Oradell, N.J.

The recent drop in the price of gasoline was the second most popular subject for the contest.

Joe Petitto of Tyler, Texas, represents this group with, "If I knew the price of gas was going to be so low, I'd never have given up the car."

The philatelic line winner comes from Gerald Boren of Gilbert, Ariz., who transforms the oxcart into new Postal Service equipment, as shown nearby.

The nonphilatelic winner is "You know Babe, the Blue Ox? Well, this here is Gabe the Green Ox, and he's 'going green' to save the environment!" It is the brainchild of Patricia Walters from Salesville, Ohio.

Both winners will receive *Linn's Stamp Identifier* published by *Linn's*, or a 13-week subscription to *Linn's* (a new subscription has an extension). The book has a retail value of \$12.99.

Here are the best of the runners-up:

"Come on Babe, let's

get home. This is the largest package of kiloware I've ever received!" from David Schwartz of Comack, N.Y.

"Another wrong turn, and I'm hooking up the GPS!" by David Trutwin from Fort Mohave, Ariz.

"Sure the cart's heavy, but look on the bright side, You're not one of those Western Cattle in a Storm" sent by Christopher Palermo of Mountain View, Calif.

"Does my ox qualify for the carpool lane?" from

Terry Meier of Washington, D.C.

"Since we're not going to be around forever, I guess the yokes on you!" by Steve Kotler of San Francisco, Calif.

"Hmmmmmm, What's Burma Shave?" sent by Bob Sazama of The Villages, Fla.

Thanks and a tip of the hat to all who entered.

The next cartoon caption contest will be announced in the March 9 issue of *Linn's*. ■

This new postmarking machine is awesome for flats!



Gerald Boren from Gilbert, Ariz., wins one of two prizes in the January U.S. Stamp Notes cartoon caption contest, with this line that gives the oxcart a new application for an old U.S. Postal Service function. The nonphilatelic winner was Patricia Walters. The next cartoon caption contest will be announced in *Linn's* March 9 issue.

Tips for expertizing the Kansas-Nebraska overprints of 1929

Is it possible that the Kansas-Nebraska overprints in your collection have been faked?

Unfortunately, the answer is yes.

Stamps overprinted "Kans." and "Nebr." were issued in 1929 with 11 stamps in each set (Scott 658-668 and 669-679). The denominations ranged from 1¢ to 10¢, including a 1½¢ stamp in each set.

The Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* provides this introductory note: "This special issue was authorized as a measure of preventing losses from post office burglaries. Approximately a year's supply was printed and issued to postmasters. The P.O. Dept. found it desirable to discontinue the State overprinted stamps after the initial supply was used."

This cryptic entry glosses over the fact that there were many robberies in Midwest post offices during the late 1920s. To combat this trend, the Post Office Department came up with the idea to print the name of a state on definitive stamps, so that if stolen in a robbery, the stamps could not be sold in quantity in another state.

There were plans to provide state-overprinted definitives for all 48 states. The Kansas-Nebraska overprints on the 1926-27 issues with gauge 11

by 10½ perforations were merely a test.

According to researcher Gary Griffith in his book *United States Stamps 1927-32* (published by *Linn's Stamp News* in 2001), those two states were chosen because they were part of the territory of Louis A. Johnson, postal inspector-in-charge at Kansas City, Mo., who had recommended identifying stamps in this manner.

The Kansas-Nebraska overprints were officially placed on sale at the Philatelic Agency in Washington, D.C. on May 1, 1929, but they had been distributed to post offices in the two states on April 13, and some were placed on sale almost immediately. Some denominations are known canceled as early as April 15.

To make a long story short, the experiment was considered to be a failure. Not only did the stamps have to be overprinted using the recently developed precanceling process for rotary press-produced stamps, but the overprints required special handling and accounting to assure that they went to the correct post offices.

Once the stamps arrived, complaints began to roll in: the black overprints were hard to see on dark stamps (the 7¢ black, for example); and because the POD had prohibited their use for local precancels, a separate order was necessary for unoverprinted stamps to be used for that purpose.

Also, there was the problem of recognizing stamps legitimately sold in one state, but used in another.

While the POD had ruled that these stamps were valid for postage anywhere in the United States, not all postmasters understood that to be the case, resulting in unwarranted rejections by post offices.

Beyond that, many businesses outside the two states that had received



These 6¢ stamps show the genuine Kansas and Nebraska overprints.

these stamps in payment of small debts didn't know whether such stamps would be rejected, and that resulted in thousands of questions seeking clarification.

As a result, it was decided to let the idea die a quiet death; there would not be similar stamps for the other 46 states.

But philatelic confusion created by just the two sets remains. It stems from the fact that these overprints, while mostly not

ing the overprints to sell to collectors, and it has been done by many people, in many ways, over many years.

There are so many of these fakes in the philatelic marketplace and in albums, that collectors often refuse to buy these stamps without a certificate of authenticity, an uncertain proposition since most will cost less than the cost of a certificate.

This is especially true for used examples.



Compare the two genuine overprints on the 6¢ stamps to these fakes. The size and placement of the letters are key indicators, and the fakers often get the period wrong, too.

expensive, are much more difficult to find than the basic unoverprinted stamps.

The Scott catalog lists mint examples of the overprints at \$2.50 to \$90, with most being \$35 or much less. For the unoverprinted stamps, the Scott value is \$17.75 for the entire set.

Thus, there has been money to be made by fak-

An article from the Feb. 21, 1949 issue of the *Chambers Stamp Journal* provides a view of the extent of this fakery. Titled "Forged U.S. Overprints Lead to Conviction," it reads, in part, "Despite the fact that there is currently no specific Federal statute regulating the falsification of overprints on canceled United

States stamps, a conviction was obtained in the case of a former New York stamp firm proprietor indicted on a charge of applying spurious overprints in order to manufacture such U.S. varieties as the Kansas-Nebraska sets, Canal Zone, Guam, Philippines and Puerto Rico issues."

According to the article, the defendant, who was not named, was the first to stand trial out of a group of seven dealers originally indicted in 1944. He was sentenced to a year and a day in prison, a fine of \$1,000, and placed on probation for an additional two years.

Some defendants had already pled guilty, and it is a safe bet that after this conviction, others would as well.

The article continues: "The chief argument for the defense was the fact that most of the overprinting was done on canceled

stamps. However, Judge Simon F. Rifkin ruled that postage stamps whether canceled or not, are still government securities.

The article also describes some of the evidence: "Approximately 10,000 original stamps and suspected forgeries were photographed in de-

Continued on page 32



Note the vertical ridges and single horizontal gum breaker on the back of this 9¢ Kansas overprint. This is a primary identifier for genuine Kansas-Nebraska stamps.

Continued from page 6
tail by the Philatelic Research Laboratory in order to build an air-tight case for the government ... More than 500 of the photographs, along with 79 of the forged overprints, were shown to the jury during the two-day trial. The jury needed only three minutes to arrive at its verdict."

Kansas-Nebraska expertizing

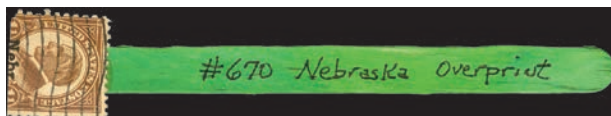
So, let's take a look at how expertizers deal with these issues, whether mint or used. We need to start with the basic, unoverprinted stamps because forgers have not always been careful to put their handiwork on the correct stamp.

The basic stamps are Scott 632-634 and 635-642. This excludes 634A, the Type II 2¢.

The stamps are rotary press-printed, perforated gauge 11 by 10½ with 14 vertical gum ridges, and a single, or at most two, horizontal gum breakers.

This means that stamps perforated gauge 10 by 10 or 11 by 11, and those with straight edges, cannot be genuine overprints. Mint stamps with the wrong ridges or without ridges and with the wrong gum breakers cannot be genuine overprints.

The overprints were



The horizontal width of the Kansas and Nebraska overprints is also important, and this handy aid made by Linn's reader Thomas Heifner using a stamp and ice pop stick can help to identify fakes.

added directly after the printing of the designs, and before the application of the gum. Thus, for mint examples, there can be no impression in the gum of the overprint, as there often is when a fake overprint is added after gumming.

Think of the impression left by a typewriter key on the back of relatively thin paper.

There are colors associated with the genuine overprints, and later versions of the correct stamp often are in the wrong shade to be a genuine Kansas-Nebraska overprint. For example, the genuine overprinted 8¢ is olive green. If the stamp is olive bister, the overprint is a fake.

For plate blocks, it is worth checking the plate number against the list of known plates in the *Durand Standard Plate Number Catalog*, as only a small number of plates were used for the overprints.

For example, the 2¢ Nebraska is associated with nine plates. There were more than 250 plates used to print the basic 2¢ stamp.

Look at the quality and shape and size of the genuine overprints shown nearby. Then compare them with the group of fake overprints in the other illustration.

Linn's reader Thomas Heifner of Panama City Beach, Fla., has created his own aid for examining Kansas-Nebraska overprints. He horizontally slices inexpensive used stamps through the overprints, affixes them to ice pop sticks and then uses them to compare with candidates.

Finally, you will need

a good magnifier with a resolution of 10-power or greater for this test, but overprints added on a used stamp can be detected because the overprint will be on top of, instead of underneath, the cancellation.

For those interested in further information, the basic work on this issue is the 10-page first section of the American Philatelic Society handbook *Kansas-Nebraska Overprints* (published in 1973, second printing 1977). Compiled by Robert H. Schoen and James T. DeVoss, the section is titled "Counterfeit Kansas-Nebraska Overprints on 1922-34 Issue."

Unfortunately this booklet is out of print, but examples can be found through philatelic literature dealers, and can be obtained as photo-

copies from the American Philatelic Research Library, <http://stamps.org/About-the-Library>.

If you are a member of the APS, the handbook is available as a pdf on the members-only section of the website, http://stamps.org/userfiles/file/MyAPS/Book_CounterfeitKN.pdf.

The handbook also contains a second, 23-page section titled "First Day Covers of the Kansas-Nebraska Overprints" by Jack V. Harvey.

A helpful article by Ken Lawrence, "New fake Kansas-Nebraska overprints circulating through stamp marketplace," was published in the Aug. 20, 1990, issue of *Linn's*. With his permission, I am happy to make copies of that article available to Linn's readers at cost: 10¢ in mint postage and an addressed, stamped envelope sent to me, John Hotchner, Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125.

Cartoon winner

The design of the 1998 nondenominated (25¢) Diner presorted first-class stamp issued in 1998 does not include a brand name, and quite a number of entries in the February cartoon caption contest featuring that stamp played off that fact.

As David Schwartz of



One of the more colorful entries received for the Diner stamp contest is this classic from James Thomas of Edmond, Okla.

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Should certificates provide more information?

Looking behind the scenes at the expertization process, John Hotchner explains why using certificates to educate the submitters could be a nightmare for expertizers.

Linn's reader John Wickham from Colorado had an expertizing experience that left him wanting more information. Let's let him tell his story:

"Several years ago I found a [United States] Scott No. PR2, the 10¢ Franklin Newspaper and Periodical stamp in a mixture at an estate sale. After looking it up in the Scott Catalogue, I excitedly called my stamp dealer and described the stamp to him.

"He suggested that I bring it in for him to look at and upon seeing it, he suggested that I submit it for authentication to the APS [American Philatelic Society] Expertizing Service. It came back as 'a counterfeit with a fake cancellation added.'

"My complaint about their certificate is that it had no explanation or cover letter describing why it was determined to be not authentic or was a counterfeit. After spending somewhere in the neighborhood of \$60 to \$80 for their rendering, why don't they describe their conclusion on the certificate or in a cover letter, so that we as collectors can learn from their expertise?"

The issue before us is this: Is Wickham's expectation of a detailed explanation of the finding a reasonable one?

First, some background information. The Scott valuation for Scott PR2 is \$2,000 used. Expertizing houses charge fees based upon the value of the item submitted, and in this case, it would have been 3 percent (for APS members; 5 percent for nonmembers) of the Scott value, or \$60, plus postage for return of the item and certificate.

I have three reactions to the request for a detailed explanation.

As one who submits material for expertizing, I'd be more than glad if it were possible to have this information provided.

As an expertizer, I see this as being easy to do in some cases, but very difficult to do in a concise manner with most.

If I were an administrator of an expertizing organization, I'd look at this requirement as a nightmare. Why?

First, there usually are multiple expertizers reviewing each item. While the final decision



This American Philatelic Society certificate provides an opinion stating that the newspaper and periodical stamp is "a counterfeit with a fake cancellation added." The submitter has suggested that more information be provided with such expertization certificates to help educate. Is that possible? Is it practical?

is agreed, there may be differing — even conflicting — observations that lead to it. This is especially true where the item being expertized, or "the patient," is complicated, with several aspects that need to be looked at.

Second, the expertizers do not now write extensive comments on worksheets. The APS worksheet, which serves as a checklist for the review process, is shown nearby, to give an idea of what the expertizer is looking for.

Additional comments can be provided on the back of the form. In general, I have comments to support my findings, or about aspects of the patient that are bothersome, for about two-thirds of the items I receive to expertise. I provide these comments for the information of expertizers who might review the item after me, and for the benefit of the headquarters staff who have to synthesize the

This is the worksheet that American Philatelic Society expertizers use when reviewing items submitted. It allows them to make short notes, and to be certain that they don't miss any aspect of the item in question that is germane to a final opinion. Additional comments can be made on the back, but it would not be sufficient to address every aspect in depth of why an item has been found to be not authentic.

feedback from all the expertizers and provide the final opinion.

My comments often are not short declarative sentences, but more in the nature of informed opinions on issues the patient presents.

Third, the expertizers are not gathered in a single location at one time so that they can argue out an opinion, and one person can be assigned (as with the Supreme Court) to write

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U.S. STAMP NOTES

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the opinion, while others concur or write dissents.

The determination of the final opinion, thus, becomes the responsibility of the headquarters staff, which is not often expert in the issues presented by the patient and relies on the unanimous finding of the expertizers. Alternatively, one expertizer would have to take on the task after all the opinions are in. Not only would this lengthen the process, but it would be a significant investment of time for whoever it was assigned to.

Fourth, it is hard enough to find expertizers who are willing to do the work of expertizing for the pittance per item that is “paid” and which in fact contributes only a little bit to the cost of equipment, references, and so on that expertizers put out. In no way is it intended to compensate for the time spent.

Anything that would make it more difficult to attract the talent I need to run my expertizing service is not something I would want.

If I ran an expertization service, could I charge more per item and compensate the expertizers for the work? Yes, but would users be happy about higher fees? And would expertizers be willing to devote more time at any price? Doubtful.

Well, what about just providing the information on the easy patients? Yes, that could be done, but it would hardly satisfy the demand. In fact, starting down that path would



Starting in 1865, the United States issued stamps for the prepayment of postage on bulk shipments of newspapers and periodicals. The 1865 10¢ blue green newspaper and periodical stamp shows Benjamin Franklin (Scott PR2). This stamp is valued in the 2015 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* at \$2,000 used and \$300 unused.

create a demand I am not willing to encourage.

There are a couple of additional considerations. First, I am not sure that most users of expertization services would even want this kind of feedback. They seem to be happy with a thumbs up or thumbs down.

So, is there room for a dual track system, where those who want the expanded feedback check a box and pay extra for it?

Again, it's possible, but I wouldn't want to be the service that is the beta test platform. I see too much room for unhappiness because there can never be enough information presented, and submitters want certainty. Often, what we can provide is not certainty, but an informed opinion. And explaining that in individual cases, commenting on all or most of the aspects the patient presents will not be a short process.

As a final comment, I would offer that information in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* is often a good guide to what is genuine and what is not.

For the patient covered by the certificate pictured here, the introduction to the newspaper and periodical stamp section in the Scott U.S. Specialized contains this useful sentence: “Virtually all used stamps of Nos. PR1-PR4 are canceled by blue brush strokes and have faults, such as tears, stains, creases, etc.” That makes this patient immediately suspect as it is in very nice condition, with a somewhat legible printed circular handcancel. ■

A suggested dealer code of ethics for expertization

Some reports from collectors about dealer practices at the point of sale illustrate the need for standardization of what to expect regarding the expertization of stamps and covers.

Several readers have written to me about inconsistent practices regarding expertizing that they have encountered while purchasing stamps from dealers.

There is no governing set of rules or standard practices to which dealers are expected to adhere, and the result is that buyers and dealers sometimes engage in an elaborate dance to establish ground rules at the point of sale, leaving both unhappy.

And that is when the collector-buyers are knowledgeable enough to ask the right questions. Many of us aren't.

Examples of two "bad" certificates are shown here.

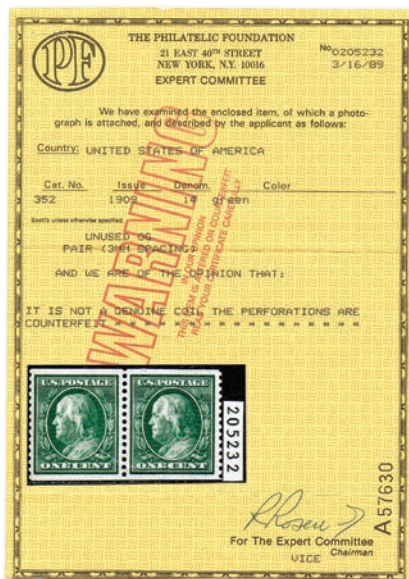
I think that establishing a code of ethics for this situation, under the umbrella of the American Stamp Dealers Association, would help smooth the relationship between dealers and collectors at the point of sale. If everyone knew what to expect, I am certain that there would be more buyers feeling comfortable enough to buy more stamps, making it worthwhile for dealers to buy into such a code.

First, let's look at a couple of reader experiences. Rod Juell wrote about two recent situations: "An established dealer was offering Washington-Franklin coils at very reasonable prices, and his terms of sale included refund of expertizing costs for 'bad' certificates.

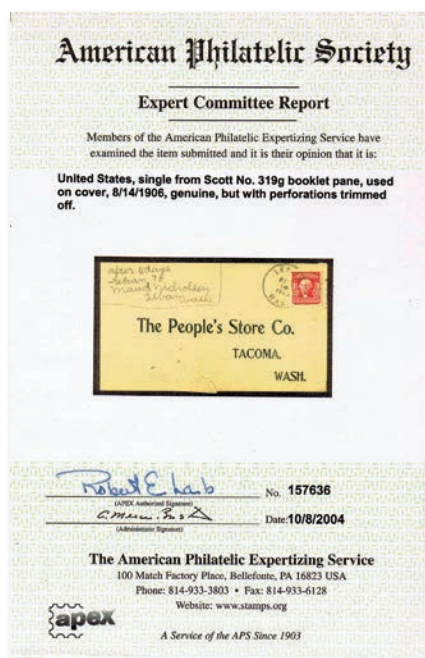
"I purchased ten stamps. Nine came back with bad certificates. The dealer refunded my money and the cost of the certificates, but also told me he would do no further business with me because I was too picky.

"While at a major national show this past Fall, I saw a stamp I needed at a dealer table. I asked the dealer if he would place it on extension for expertizing. I was taken aback when he said 'No.' I didn't buy the stamp."

Sean Kennedy provides this perspective: "I have purchased over 6,000 lots on eBay since 2004 and 99.9 percent of my experiences have been positive, however, my only bad experiences have been with how some dealers handle expertizing. Most are very professional and are willing



This 1989 Philatelic Foundation certificate states that the illustrated pair of 1¢ Washington stamps submitted as Scott 352, horizontal coils, is actually a pair of imperforate Scott 343 with vertical perforations added.



This cover, submitted as having a possible imperforate single, is identified by the 2004 American Philatelic Society certificate as bearing a single from Scott 319g, a booklet pane, with perforations trimmed off.

to give a time extension on returns for expertizing. Some, surprisingly are even willing to pay the full cost for an expert certificate if it comes back as a fake, but it is only a handful of dealers that do this.

"Other dealers are willing to refund the cost of the stamp, however, it has to be returned with the original certificate, so I basically foot the cost to certify the dealer's inventory.

"One of the worst experiences for me is when I return items with certificates noting a fraudulent stamp, that is subsequently relisted on eBay without the certificate noted. Despite the fact that I reported the sellers to eBay, two such items sold to other bidders."

WHAT TO DO

Obviously, it takes only a few dealers engaging in such practices to make collectors suspicious of all. Of course, it needs to be said that collectors selling material that should be expertized also are sometimes guilty of similar practices. However, dealers can be regulated through their membership in ASDA and other associations, but only if there is a standard set of expectations that can be enforced.

I have written to ASDA president Mark Reasoner, and am hopeful that the concept will be favorably considered. At a minimum, I would like to see these four tenets:

1. A stamp or cover will be placed on extension for expertizing at the request of a potential buyer who is willing to put up a deposit of half the selling price and sign a note saying that the item will be purchased if the certificate is good. The buyer and seller must agree up front as to which expertizing service will do the work.

2. The dealer will submit the item and bear the cost of expertizing if the certificate comes back bad. The cost of expertizing may be added to the price of the item if it receives a good certificate.

3. Dealers agree that items that come back with a bad certificate (as their property) may not be forced on the potential buyer

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even if resubmitted to another service and the item is judged to be good. In any case, the item cannot be sold as genuine until the original certificate has been overtaken by a good certificate either from the original expertizing service, or another.

4. Dealers will not knowingly sell as genuine any material with old certificates saying "genuine" that they have reason to believe are inaccurate.

Under these tenets, though, dealers will not be required to submit for expertizing every stamp or cover they have for sale

that could be questioned. While it would be nice to think that they would, there are a large number of items that both

dealers and knowledgeable buyers would recognize as genuine or not. Besides, even collectors who are not knowledgeable enough have some responsibility for protecting their own interests.

If this list of tenets were adopted, I think many more items would be expertized before being offered for sale than is currently the case, because offering an item with a "good" certificate makes it more salable and eliminates the hassle

of dealing with the possibility of a "bad" certificate after a sale seems imminent.

Not only would this benefit both collectors and dealers, I think it also would reduce the amount of nongenuine material being offered, because dealers would not want to run the risk of having to pay for a certificate that they expect to come back as not genuine.

As always, I am happy to hear from readers with thoughts about this subject, or questions and experiences about any aspect of expertizing. I can be contacted at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125. ■

Curiosities to confound the stamp expertizer

Sometimes an expert certificate comes back with “no opinion,” instead of a definite good or bad. John Hotchner discusses some of the reasons why and provides examples.

What is an expert? Having that label is a mixed blessing. Some treat experts with near reverence, as if every thought expounded were golden coins. Others see experts as a challenge: Can you stump them? Prove them wrong? Make them waffle?

I once heard “experts” defined in a business sense as “anyone from out of town,” meaning they are a bit of an unknown quantity, but they also bring a new set of eyes and experiences to a problem. The result may be a new approach to identifying the nature of a problem, its causes, and possible ways to fix it.

As in business, experts in philately deliver opinions and ideas, and sometimes they do not agree.

For stamps and covers, the opinion comes in the form of a certificate stating whether an item is genuine or not. But it is still an opinion, subject to modification if additional information is submitted later or if new technology reveals more about the characteristics of the patient — the submitted stamp or cover — being examined.

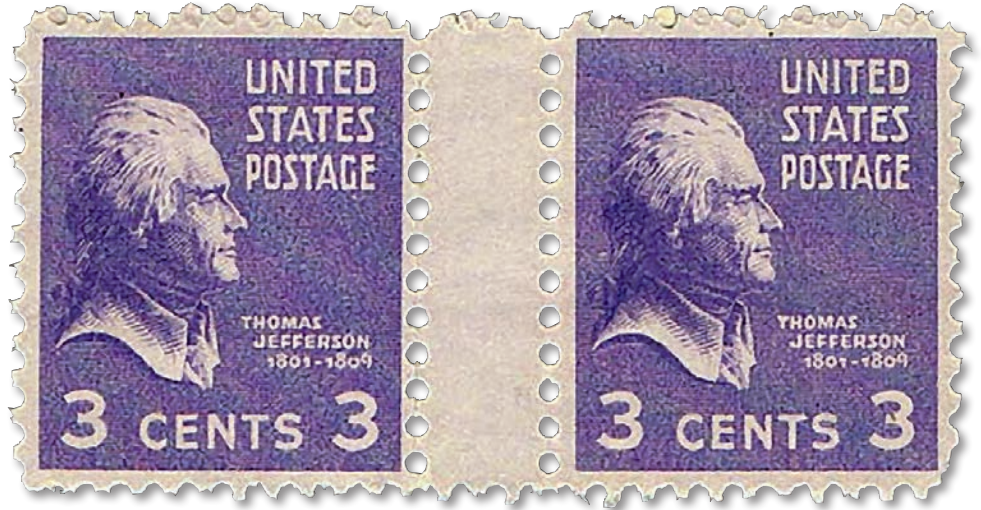
This is not to suggest that all opinions on philatelic certificates can or should be questioned. In fact, most opinions and findings represented by a certificate are rock solid based on the evidence. But some opinions are the result of the best thinking and testing that can be done at a given moment, leaving the expert less than 100 percent certain.

Sometimes a preponderance of the evidence supports a finding of genuine or not genuine, there being only a shadow of doubt.

But often, such situations result in a “no opinion” certificate; and as maddening as that may be to the submitter, it is the correct call because the level of certainty needed for experts to reach a conclusion is not there.

Shown are four examples to illustrate these points.

For the United States 1938 3¢ Jefferson Presidential stamp (Scott 807) the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* lists a pair with full vertical



Although this appears to be a genuine United States 3¢ Jefferson Presidential stamp horizontal pair with full vertical gutter between, it is a cleverly done fake.



These three examples of the 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt Presidential stamp show some of the color varieties that exist.

gutter between. Upon examination, the example pictured nearby was found to be not genuine. While it is a beautifully done reconstruction, close examination shows that the left-hand stamp has been artfully attached to a gutter snipe single. There is no doubt. This is a fake, and no amount of new information or technology is going to alter that opinion.

The 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt Presidential

stamp (Scott 830) was discussed in this column in the Aug. 24, 2014, *Linn's*. The basic stamp is listed in the Scott U.S. Specialized catalog as deep ultramarine, but there are blue and deep blue versions that are scarce and literally dozens of color varieties in between. Deep blue is the most desirable, having a catalog value of \$240 for a mint single and \$1,200 for a plate block.

Expertizing these 30¢ Presidential stamps is a trial, as the expert must evaluate for the many shades of color between ultramarine and deep blue, and reach a conclusion based on experience and reference examples.

Most patients can be easily assigned to the ultramarine to blue range with little difficulty, but it is a judgment call as to whether a specific example crosses the threshold to deep blue. I think that in the past more examples have been authenticated as genuine deep blue than warranted.

It is now possible to have stamp color evaluated by spectroscopic equipment that can compare the properties of a known example to those of a candidate. This is expensive equipment, and I am not certain that all expertizing services have access to it. Certainly it is beyond the wallet of most individual expertizers. However, it is fast becoming an

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essential tool in the realm of expertizing.

There are two essential resources for those with an interest in understanding the burgeoning importance of science in expertizing.

The first is the yearly compilation *Fakes Forgeries Experts* published in May of each year by Postiljonen A/S in Denmark, under the auspices of the International Association of Philatelic Experts.

Among the 20 articles in the new May 2015 issue are six that describe in-depth the application of scientific methods to expertizing.

For further information and ordering instructions visit the website www.ffejjournal.com, or write to Postiljonen A/S, Østergade 1, 2 sal, DK-1100 Copenhagen K, Denmark.

The other resource is the Institute for Analytical Philately Inc. (IAP), which publishes *The Analyst* twice a year and sponsors the Analytical Methods in Philately symposium.

The next symposium will take place Nov. 18-19 in Itasca, Ill., a northwest suburb of Chicago, in association with the Chicagopex stamp show on Nov. 20-22.

The institute promises, "An intriguing assemblage of 12 technical presentations bracketed by incisive overviews of where analytical philately has been and where it is headed."

For more information, visit the institute's website, <http://analyticalphilately.org>, or write to its treasurer, Ken Nilsestuen, PMB31, 1668 Merriman Road, Akron, OH 44313.

Finally, there is the problem of "no opinions." Reasons for this can range from there being no appropriate expert available, to two or more experts disagreeing on what the finding should be.



Scott 613, the perf 11, rotary press version of the 1923 2¢ black Harding Memorial stamp is very scarce, cataloging at \$40,000.



How carefully is a stamp examined when being expertized? This Scott 12 5¢ Jefferson candidate got a thorough going over when it was reviewed, with a surprising result. ■

Intellectual honesty is critical in expertizing. Experts do not go along to get along. If there are doubts, they will be forcefully stated, and they must be resolved before a positive certificate can be issued.

A split decision that sticks in my mind was a U.S. Scott 613 candidate, the perf 11 rotary press version of the 2¢ black Harding Memorial stamp, which catalogs at \$40,000 used (the only way it is known to exist).

Three experts gave it a thumbs up. Two others, myself included, gave it a thumbs down, based on image size, and for me, the presence of minor set off on the back, an often-seen characteristic of flat-plate printing.

The owner asked for and was provided the reasons why a positive opinion was not given. This led to correspondence and sharing of images of other known examples of Scott 613 that convinced me, and apparently the other negative opinion, that the characteristics of this example were in keeping with genuine examples of Scott 613. We changed our opinions.

In high-stakes cases such as this, the submitter often asks for the reasons for negative or no opinions, and that frequently leads to reconsideration, though a positive result is not guaranteed.

The objective is to be scrupulously accurate and fair, based on a careful and thorough review of every aspect of the stamp.

A final example of a detailed review is the 5¢ Jefferson stamp submitted as a Scott 12, imperf candidate. It received one of my favorite certificate descriptions, "United States, Scott No 29 altered, used, genuine, but cut-to-shape, rebacked with margins added, part of frame painted in, cancel extended." ■

When to pursue expertization; extension standards

Skepticism has its place in the stamp hobby. When a stamp or a cover looks too good to be true, that is a good indication that it might be time to call in the experts.

Several readers have asked: In what situation should a stamp or cover be expertized?

I could write several long and wordy columns on this subject, but a more meaningful way to approach it may be to show some examples over the next several columns, and say a bit about why these items need to be expertized.

When something is improbable, as with the three items shown with this column, the better part of valor is to approach it from a skeptical perspective.

The first cover pictured here purports to be canceled in Sonoma, Calif., on Feb. 11, 1909. The established first day for the 2¢ Lincoln Centenary stamp is Feb. 12.

The stamps were shipped to postmasters on Jan. 28, with instructions that they be placed on sale Feb. 12. While not out of the question that there could have been an early release, it is not likely after all these years that a new certifiable earlier date would be found.

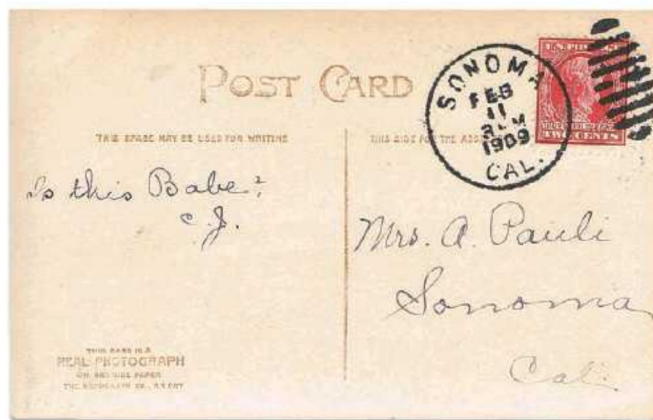
Indeed, this candidate for earliest known use failed certification with a finding that the cancellation had been drawn in.

The illustrated pair of 2¢ black Harding stamps might make the heart of a philatelist skip a beat. Perf 11 Hardings are either Scott 610 (flat plate), or the extremely rare Scott 613 (rotary press version). To be the latter, the stamps have to be taller than the flat plate version. Careful measurement with a millimeter gauge eliminates that possibility.

This example looks like a normal horizontal pair of Scott 610 that is imperf between.

The *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* lists horizontal pairs that are imperf vertically, but not imperf between. The perforation measurement on this pair is wrong, at 11.5 by 11.5, so this turns out to be a fake, made from the flat plate imperforate version (Scott 611).

Finally, we have what appears to be a 1931



Is this a genuine pre-first-day cover for the 1909 2¢ Lincoln Centenary stamp?



This horizontal unused (hinged) pair of 2¢ black Hardings, imperf between, does not correspond to a Scott catalog error listing.

2¢ Red Cross stamp missing the red cross (Scott 702a).

I notice a couple of problems right off the bat. Only one example of the error is known, the result of a corner fold between the application of the engraved black and the addition of the engraved red. That recorded example is in mint condition.

Looking at the stamp shown nearby under 30-power magnification, it is evident that the red cross was abraded off the stamp while it was on the cover. This became obvious when looking at the cancellation above the area of the red cross; it has been worn away and then recreated using ink that is a slightly different color than the postmark ink used over the black-only part of the stamp.

So, the lesson for today is this: If something seems too good to be true, it probably is, and a skeptic's review via expertizing will often reveal problems that disqualify it.

UNIFORM EXTENSION STANDARD?

In this column in the May monthly issue of *Linn's*, I ventured into a minefield: the issue of dealer/auctioneer practices in handling buyer requests to have purchases expertized. This earlier column was prompted by several readers who had bad experiences.

The complaints were that some dealers and auctioneers had policies that were not customer friendly, and some seemed to punish buyers for wanting to make sure that their purchases were genuine, even to the point of refusing to do future business with those customers asking for certificates of authenticity.

While undoubtedly a minority in the dealer community, dealers engaging in such practices reflect badly on all, so in the earlier column I had suggested that the American Stamp Dealers Association draft a set of recommended policies that encourage consistency and a proper balance between the rights of dealers and the rights of buyers.

I'm glad to report that ASDA president Mark Reasoner and his board of directors are engaged in a project to do just that.

While understanding that adopting a set of policies will not cure all the ills in this realm, I believe there is value in establishing a baseline, both to govern dealers and auctioneers and to establish norms for buyers.

In the course of talking with dealer friends about this subject, I was shown a good model for such a document by Stephen T. Taylor, a postal history dealer of mostly United States material who is based in Surrey, England.

Taylor has a presence at most of the larger

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U.S. shows, and I have been a happy customer of his for many years.

He has kindly agreed to let me publish his expertizing policies as an example of what I hope ASDA will cover in an industry-wide recommendation.

In reading them, keep in mind that putting an item "on extension" is how the trade refers to delaying final payment for a specified item pending receipt of a certificate.

Here is Taylor's return and extension policy:

"All items are sold as

genuine (unless described otherwise) and 'as described,' and can be returned within 14 days of purchase with original plastic sleeve and invoice (or copy of credit card receipt) if not as described.

"Any item without a Philatelic Foundation or American Philatelic Expertizing Service certificate issued within the past five years can be placed on extension.

"Terms and conditions regarding extensions (1) Purchases must be paid in full before placing on extension,

"(2) Notification of extension via fax or email within 7 days of purchase for mail orders, or at time of purchase for show purchases,



Only one example is known of the red-cross-missing error of the 1931 2c Red Cross stamp. Is this a new discovery of that error?

after 90 days.

"(7) A full refund of the purchase price plus the cost of the certificate and postage (if sent by you) will be made if the item is 'not as described' or a partial refund to be agreed if you would like to keep the item,

"(8) A not-as-described item must be returned with original plastic sleeve, a copy of the purchase invoice or credit card receipt, and the expert committee certificate.

Refund will be issued immediately upon receipt of returned item and refunded to your credit card (if paid by card) or US check mailed to you if paid by check or cash,

"(9) No refunds in cases of a 'no opinion' or a 'declined opinion'.

"(10) Buyer is responsible for the cost of the certificate and postage (if sent by me) in the case of an 'as described' opinion."

Because auctioneers often deal in high-end material, most have developed and publish their policies under their terms of sale.

Net-price dealers are less likely to have published policies, but it is a good idea to ask if there is one when buying expensive stamps.

Taylor's policies are published on his website, www.stephentaylor.co.uk, and he points them out to anyone asking about sending a purchased item for expertizing. ■

"(3) Acceptable committees for USA postal history are the Philatelic Foundation, New York, NY; the American Philatelic Expertizing Service, Bellefonte, PA; or the Confederate Stamp Alliance, Capshaw, AL (Confederate covers only)

"(4) Item(s) must be sent for expertization within 7 days of receipt and a copy of the application mailed, faxed or emailed to me (or I can send the item directly if preferred),

"(5) Item on extension is at buyer's risk in case of a loss if not sent by me (if sent by me, my dealer's insurance policy covers it for the purchase price),

"(6) Unless advised otherwise by fax or email, items are assumed to have cleared

A magnifier and stamp friends can save you money

Avoiding expertizing fees when they are not essential is a good strategy. Here are two recommendations that you can try yourself before sending off an item for expertization.

In the previous column in this series on expertization (*Linn's* July monthly), we looked at examples of when expertizing is needed.

There were three takeaways from that column: Expertizing is needed when a cover seems to be too good to be true, when an unlisted error is "discovered" for an old stamp, and when that stamp issue has a history of being subjected to a lot of fakery.

Underlying these reasons are two others: You don't have the experience to authenticate a stamp or cover, which is true for the great majority of collectors; and you want a high degree of certainty that what you are buying or selling is genuine, keeping in mind that a certificate with something you are selling often increases its sale value well beyond what the certificate costs.

And speaking of cost, avoiding expertizing fees when expertizing is not essential is also a good strategy.

Here are two recommendations to help you avoid unneeded expertizing fees:

1. Invest in an inexpensive 30-power magnifier that includes a battery powered light source. If your favorite stamp dealer does not have these for sale, try philatelic supply firms that advertise in *Linn's*. Sometimes these magnifiers also can be found at a photo supply store or a jeweler.

2. Utilize the knowledge available to you at your nearest stamp club, through dealers at a local stamp shows, or in societies of which you are a member.

Using a 30-power magnifier to compare a normal example of a stamp versus a candidate for expertizing will often reveal whether the candidate has a chance of passing muster.

For example, a missing color means just that: The totality of the color is not present. The same is true for missing perforations. When it comes to modern-era multicolor stamps, what at first glance looks like a missing color can be due to color misregistration, partial printing of a given color, or intentional or unintentional exposure to sunlight or chemicals.

Take a look at the 1959 \$1 postage due



Look closely at this pair of United States 1959 postage due stamps and you will see what looks like a major flaw, with the "D" missing from "Dollar." On inspection under 30-power magnification, a few dots of the missing black "D" on the right-hand stamp are present.



This 1968 6¢ Flag and White House stamp block of four appears to be imperforate between the stamps and the right margin, but it does not quite qualify as there are light pin impressions just inside the design.

pair (Scott J100) shown nearby. The right-hand stamp reads "ollar" rather than "Dollar". But if you look at the stamp under 30-power magnification, you can see a few dots of black in the "D" position.

A similar example exists on the 1988 36¢ Igor Sikorsky airmail stamp (Scott C119), where his name, in red, seems to be missing, but under 30-power magnification some of the red dots can be seen that are not visible to the unaided eye.

Another example is frequently seen on the 1968 6¢ Flag and White House Giori-printed sheet stamp (Scott 1338), which is sometimes offered with imperforate right margins. In every example I have seen, under 30-power magnification, pin impressions can be seen from the back just inside the design.

Examining gum and perforation holes under 30-power magnification also can tell you a lot about whether those aspects of a stamp are genuine. Are the holes oblong or perfectly round? Is there gum that permeates the perf tips? Is the grain of the gum consistent and a match for normal gum?

The other resource that collectors sometimes overlook is our collector and dealer friends and associates who we see at stamp club meetings, shows and bourses, or know via mail and the Internet. These folks have decades of experience. Simply asking for their thoughts on a stamp or cover that you think might be a good find is worth your while.

While they might not be able to tell you for certain that an item is good, they often can tell if it is not. I have saved quite a few bucks using this method, thereby sending in for expertizing only those stamps that have a good chance of success.

SO WHAT DOES IT SAY?

A recent listing on an auction site raised a red flag that is worth a mention here. Believe it or not, a purported Scott C3a, the 1918 24¢ Jenny Invert airmail error, was listed for auction in a group of high-value stamps, with a note saying that they all have certificates. What the listing did not say is whether or not the certificates refer to the stamps as "Genuine" with no faults.

The 1909 1¢ green guide line pair (Scott 352) shown on page 89 could be listed as having a certificate — but leaving out the important detail that the certificate says the stamps are faked; something you might want to know, because the item if genuine catalogs for \$1,500.

On lots like the one in which the Scott C3a

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is included, always look for a readable image of the certificate. If there is not one, use the feature that most such sites provide, which is to allow asking the poster to provide the wording on the certificate. That way you don't get burned.

Yes, if you bid and got burned, this sort of problem probably gets fixed on the long term, or at minimum, the seller gets a bad reputation on the site. But you will have to jump through hoops to make those outcomes happen, and it all could be avoided by being careful on the front end.

AN EXPERT'S RESPONSE

Charles Vergé of the Vincent Graves Philatelic Research Foundation in Canada responded to my expertizing column in the April *Linn's* monthly about providing more information on or with certificates. While the letter is too long to print in full, I would like to share the major points.

The foundation deals only with British North America, which includes U.S. stamps from the 19th century used in Canada. Further, its experienced members meet in person to discuss patients (items being expertized), and it is supported by an extensive library of monographs, periodicals, photographs, archives, private papers, a reference collection, and access to Canada Post and its archives.

The foundation recently acquired a Foster + Freeman Video Spectral Comparator 6000,



Beware stamp and cover offers that say the item is accompanied by a certificate. As in this case, the certificate may be negative. It's best to verify that the offered item is genuine, and whether there are faults noted.

after seeing similar equipment in operation at the Smithsonian Institution's National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C.

Vergé notes that "In certain cases, where the patient is very important and could change the known facts," the VSC6000 supplements good old intensive research work.

He cited three cases from the Vincent Graves Philatelic Research Foundation's files in which the VSC6000 and/or research resulted in important new findings on patients, and extensive reports were provided to the submitter, and were published in scholarly literature.

Vergé concludes with this thought: "I agree, for all the reasons John Hotchner suggests, with the principle that providing additional information to the submitter should be an exception not a rule. However, with more use of scientific tools and the reports provided to expert committee members, it's becoming easier to share the information that underpins the expert committee's decision.

"Our committee noticed, as we get more comfortable with the use of the VSC6000 and its applications, that we are sharing more information with the submitter

either by providing them with the reports, photographs and/or covering letters that explain our decision. We also, in one case so far, where we gave a 'no opinion' decision, indicated to the submitter that we would take another look at the item if he did more research and we even suggested some leads he could follow."

Any *Linn's* reader who would like a full copy of the Vergé letter may send me 10¢ in mint postage and a stamped addressed envelope, and I will provide it. The address is John Hotchner, Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125. ■

Imperfect stamps, overprints and “almosts”

In addition to stating whether a stamp is genuine or not, expertization certificates sometimes include additional information about the condition of the stamp, or any repairs made to it.

Expertizing certificates often tell you more than the primary fact you wanted to know: genuine or not genuine. They also note other findings related to the condition of the stamp — or whether aspects of a genuine stamp have been “improved.”

This is by way of preface to a stunning listing found by *Linn's* reader Alan Bush in the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries Nov. 5-6, 2014, auction:

The description for lot 3182 reads: “10c Dark Green, First Design (#62B). Unused (no gum), copies of four certificates for this stamp with four differing opinions, including 1990 APS stating torn, 2008 APS stating reperfed at right, and cleaned stain at bottom, 2008 PSE stating reperfed at left, 2008 PF stating small painted over toned area at bottom left, whichever opinion you choose to believe this is still an attractive stamp, Scott Retail \$3,250.00.....Est. 400-500.”

This listing is a classic! The stamp under discussion is shown nearby. I won't venture to second-guess the experts who reviewed the stamp — expertizing from a photograph is always bad practice — but I will say that reperfering can be a difficult thing for experts to get right.

Many efforts at reperfering, or adding perforations, are so poorly done that they are easily discernible. But others can be so good that they are virtually undetectable. This all tracks back to the subjective nature of findings.

Remember that the result of expertizing is called an “opinion.” It may be an opinion with 100 percent certainty, or it may be based on an educated guess with nothing found to contradict it.

Yes, nothing should go on a certificate that is not based on at least the preponderance of positive evidence, but we are dealing with human beings who can sincerely believe what is not so. That is one reason why I favor having multiple expertizers review a patient (the stamp or cover being expertized) before an opinion is issued.

In the case of the Scott 62B stamp shown nearby, the basic stamp is genuine (there was no dissent on that), and whatever flaws



This 1861 10c dark green George Washington stamp (Scott 62B) has been the subject of four expertizing efforts, each with a different result. It was sold in a November 2014 Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries auction.

it may have, it is otherwise sound and visually attractive. Its flaws may make it unacceptable for some collectors to include it in their albums, while others would be happy to have it.

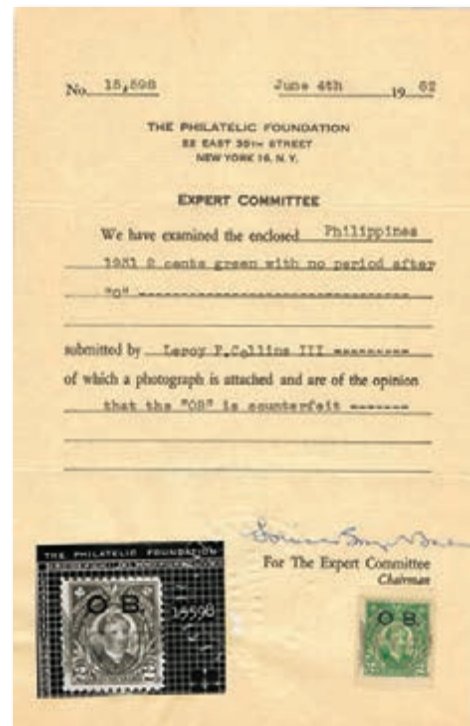
The lesson here is that a stamp you feel certain is likely genuine need not be perfect for it to be worth sending in to get a certificate. Also, even though the certificate notes flaws, the stamp should not be relegated to the trash heap. The realization on this example of Scott 62B was \$700.

OVERPRINTS

There are very few overprints on U.S. postage stamps, but they have been faked often enough that those with value (mainly the 1929 Kansas-Nebraska and the 1928 Hawaii Statehood anniversary overprints) are good candidates for certificates.

U.S. possessions are another matter. Whether Canal Zone, Cuba, Danish West Indies, Guam, Philippines, Puerto Rico or the Ryukyu Islands, some of the early issues have overprints, and they need to be expertized.

In the Philippines, postage stamps of



United States possessions overprints are often candidates for expertizing. This Philippines 1931 Official 2-centavo stamp with what looks like the variety with no period after the “O” (Scott O5b) turned out to be a counterfeit when sent in for expertization in 1962.

1917-25 were overprinted “O.B.” (for official business) to be used as Official stamps. Varieties exist. One of these, the 1931

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2-centavo green with no period after "O" (Scott O5b) is listed at \$30 used in the 2015 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of Stamps and Covers*. In 1962, when the stamp shown nearby was submitted to the Philatelic Foundation, it had a Scott catalog value of \$2 used. As indicated on the certificate, the overprint was found to be counterfeit.

Even common overprints were faked for use in packets.

Collectors can check against known genuine overprints for color of overprint ink, shape and consistency of letters and numbers, and angle/placement of the overprint, to get a good idea of whether the candidate is genuine or not, but the definitive method is to submit the stamp for expertizing if there is any doubt. There are many dangerous fakes out there.

ALMOST IMPERF

I often receive questions that go something like this, "There is a nice pair of stamps I have that is almost imperf, and I think I should get it expertized as such." Or sometimes the writer says that the stamp is missing almost all the black, or another color.

This is problematic because the definition of an error is that it must be complete or it will not be certified and will not get a Scott listing.

In fact, if an "almost" is submitted, it will be expertized as "not the error." There is no such entry on an expertizing form that says "almost" anything; it is or it is not the error.

A seller may use the "almost" language to hype the item, but it isn't an expertizing term, and if that is what a submitter wants to hear, he will be disappointed.



From the front, this strip of 1932 3c Washington stamps looks like a possible bottom pair imperf between, which has a Scott listing, No. 720c. A careful review of the back discloses one perforation hole, which makes it an "almost imperf," but you will never see that terminology used on a certificate.

An example is the vertical strip of 3c Washington by Gilbert Stuart stamps shown nearby. The Scott U.S. Specialized catalog lists as No. 720c a vertical pair, imperforate between, with a catalog value of \$700 mint and \$1,350 used. (The used value is for an example with a contemporaneous cancel. You could not buy a mint example and send it through today's mail to make it the more expensive piece.)

From the front, the strip of three looks like a candidate.

But from the back, it is clear that the space between the top pair has easily visible blind (not punched out) perfs. Further, there is



Shown above is a 1988 36c Igor Sikorsky airmail stamp (Scott C119) missing almost all of its engraved red color. No red is visible until the stamp is looked at under magnification. Compare it to the normal example shown below.

a single hole at the left end of the space between the bottom pair.

No matter how much you might wish that the hole would disappear, it is there forever, and the bottom pair will not pass inspection. There is no point in submitting the strip for expertization.

In the last expertizing column (*Linn's*, Aug. 17), I mentioned the 1988 36c Igor Sikorsky airmail stamp (Scott C119) with almost all of the red missing. A couple of readers asked why the stamp was not shown. Fact is I could not find my example, but it has surfaced,

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and is shown nearby, together with a normal example.

The stamp is another “almost.” There is no red visible, even under 10-power magnification. But under 30-power magnification, red dots can be seen in the area of Sikorsky’s signature.

Scott does not list a red-omitted error of this stamp, but it does list an error in which

the engraved red, blue and black are entirely omitted. Only the portrait of Sikorsky is present, on the sky blue background.

The Scott *Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps* (16th edition, 2014) by the late Stephen R. Datz, notes the visually missing red, with this language: “No. C119, the Sikorsky 36c airmail stamp, is known with the red engraved inscription omitted in varying degrees. However, red

specks (visible under magnification) are present on all stamps seen to date, so it is not considered to be a true 100% color-omitted error. Nevertheless, it is considered a collectible variety: price \$125 to \$150, depending on the degree of red omitted.”

That is as close to an “almost” listing as a stamp will get, but, if submitted for expertization, it will still receive a certificate saying it is not an engraved red-omitted error. ■

What to do when you receive a “no opinion” certificate

After the dreaded “no opinion” expertization certificate arrives in the mail, you first need to find out why an opinion wasn’t reached before you decide on your next step.

You’ve sent in your latest find to be expertized, pretty sure that it is what you think it is. After the usual period of nail-biting while waiting for the certificate that will prove you right, the mail brings one that says, “No opinion.”

Responses to this situation can range from puzzlement to anger, but after the disappointment, there is the question of what to do next.

There are three answers. But before we get to them, let’s first look at why a submission might receive a “no opinion.”

First and foremost is that the expertizing house does not have a staff expert who is able to do the job. It may be that there is no one at all. It may also be that there is no one who can be 100 percent certain about the item submitted.

To personalize this, there are some items I feel 100 percent competent to make judgments on, and others where I am not 100 percent certain.

In the latter case, I want others to look at it from the perspective of their knowledge and experience. If there isn’t anyone who can do that, the result may be a “no opinion” because the standard is to be 100 percent certain, unless the expert knows others will review it. To that end, the expert will write a note with his or her findings and recommend that it be reviewed.

If there is a more competent expert or two, and if they agree with me, that is great. If they don’t agree with me, also great. If the expertizing house shares their opinions with me, I learn something new, and the submitter receives an opinion about the item (“patient”) submitted either up or down.

Now, consider the case where there are two or more experts who do believe they are 100 percent competent, and after examining the item submitted come to different conclusions. Reasonable people can — and do — disagree.

Most submissions will not fall into this category because the characteristics being looked at are established and objective. As experts, we know what we are looking for



At top is Scott 613, the scarce rotary-press Warren G. Harding stamp perforated gauge 11, which catalogs at \$40,000. Below is a common flat-plate variety (610) that catalogs for 25¢.

in terms of paper type, gum, perforations, color, design characteristics, cancellations, markings on covers, how those markings match up with time periods, etc.

But especially with finds of items that are new or have a small base of established knowledge and a small number of known reference examples, two experts can read the tea leaves differently.

The differences in opinion may be so basic that there is no resolving them, but often, the experts will try to convince each other that their opinion is the correct one. And sometimes that process will result in a unified opinion. If not, the certificate comes back “no opinion.”

So now, what do you do?

When you receive a “no opinion” certificate, you need to know why. Sometimes the expertizing house will tell you, especially when there is not enough on-staff expertise. But if you are not given any information, e-mail or telephone and ask. The answer can help you to determine the next step.

In the simplest case, lack of appropriate staff means that you have wasted your time (as you will get your money back on “no opinion” certificates), but you can submit it to another expertizing house. Before you send the item, though, you might want to contact this second expertizing house to be certain it does have staff that are experts in that area.

If your item is a case of split opinions, you also can resubmit elsewhere, but that might not be your first choice. Expertizing houses will often share with you the reasons given for disagreement among the experts.

If you are an experienced and knowledgeable collector in the area being expertized and you disagree with one of the experts, you can resubmit your item with additional information that you have accumulated from your study or have found in the philatelic literature.

I have been a participant in such an exchange regarding my concerns about a United States Scott 613 candidate. This is the perforated gauge 11, rotary press version of the 2¢ black Warren Harding commemorative, which has a Scott catalog value of \$40,000 used (none are known mint).

The differences between the rotary press version and the flat plate version (Scott 610, with a catalog value of 25¢) are in fractions of a millimeter, variance in color, and, sometimes, the presence or absence of ink on the back of the stamp. There are fewer

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than 50 reported and expertized examples of Scott 613.

To make a long story short, the submitter was able to send additional objective evidence that overcame my concerns, and the candidate received a good certificate.

If that process does not work for you, or if you don't have independent expertise, then another expertizing house can be asked to have a crack at it.

If you choose not to do that, then you have the alternatives of dealing with the item as something of an orphan. A "no opinion" certificate has financial consequences because you can't sell such an item as genuine.

At the same time, you should not be selling such an item as a fake. While it is an item under a cloud, it still has value, even if less than it would have with a good certificate.

After all, somewhere down the line, new technology, or new information may allow a definitive opinion.

So, you can hold on to the item, gather information and eventually resubmit, or you can make it someone else's challenge by selling it.

In either case, you should retain the "No opinion" certificate with the item. It is an unfortunate reality that it is a temptation that some can't resist to destroy "no opinion" and bad certificates in the hope that possible buyers will convince themselves that the item is good, or at least not bother with submitting it for expertizing.

This is not only unethical and dishonest, it is increasingly likely that a careful purchaser will catch the deceit as expertizing houses put their opinion files online.

But that is a subject for another day. ■

More than reference works needed for expertization

While printed references for expertizing are essential to collectors, the final question of whether a stamp is genuine or not needs to be answered by an expertizing committee.

Austrian philatelist and philatelic author Edwin Mueller (1898-1962) once wrote: "... Only decades of experience and knowledge far above even that of an advanced collector enable the expert to do his job.

Some collectors think they can expertize themselves, when they buy literature about forgeries, which explains or pictures characteristics of genuine and forged stamps.

"We have always considered the publication of such books about forgeries as somewhat misleading, as they give some collectors the illusion that they themselves can expertise when they merely check their stamps against the pictures in a book.

"But expertizing is not so easy and such literature lulls the collector only in a false sense of security. The forgers know the 'marks of genuineness' themselves, and they like the publication of books, describing them accurately, as they help them to improve their product.

"The naive collector, who thinks that he can expertise his stamps with the help of a book he bought for a few dollars, will finally find out that he has been the biggest sucker for new improved forgeries and others not described in his book."

Without question there is truth in this opinion, and yet experts and non-experts alike can use reference works to rule out some candidates that have known counterfeit aspects, or that do not have known genuine characteristics. Where the problem lies is in taking the next step and declaring an item genuine based on such literature.

The item may be genuine, but to say that it is without question requires the services of an expertizing committee.

Fakery in philately is something like a game of leapfrog. New information about newly discovered fakes finds its way to the public, including those producing the fakes. This results in better quality fakes, which when discovered, leads to new information, and the cycle begins again.

So experts and non-experts need to pay attention to how recent the references they are using are — and how thorough as well.



These three purported errors — pairs on which one "Kans." or "Nebr." overprint seems to be missing — are all fakes. But they are close enough to genuine that many could be fooled; even if looking at references on fakes of these issues.

And experts, much like the forgers, need to put significant dollars and time into staying current with the broad swath of philatelic literature that covers their area or areas.

I have spoken of the legendary United States expert George Brett in this column before. When he was presented the Alfred F.

Lichtenstein Medal by the Collectors' Club of New York in 1983, he spoke about the need for experts to be open to new information:

"Frequently what seemed a simple subject in the beginning all too often has spread out to cover one's whole field of view. Also the idea that as one specializes one learns more and more about less and less doesn't really fit. Instead I've found myself learning more and more about more and more.

"Of course to be honest I'm always forgetting things and having to relearn them too, so the statement that I've forgotten more than I know is also true ... "

Need I mention that a sense of humility is a good attribute for an expert? As inventor Charles Kettering once wrote, "It ain't the things you don't know that get you in trouble. It's the things you know for sure that just ain't so!"

AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE

With this as background, I want to recommend a resource equally applicable for experts and the rest of us. It is an online tome titled *Index of Literature in the English Language that Describes Postal Stamp Forgeries, Fakes, Reprints, Fraudulent Postal Markings and Other Obliterations, and Bibliography* by Theodore M. Tedesco, edited and published by the American Philatelic Research Library in May 2014.

It can be found on the American Philatelic Society website, www.stamps.org, but can be accessed directly at <http://stamps.org/userfiles/file/library/TedescoIndex.pdf>. It is available for downloading, though its almost 1,100 pages make that a monumental job. You also can print out any pages that interests you.

Following seven pages of introduction are about 50 pages of references for U.S. and possessions material, and the rest is references for all other countries, in alphabetical order, and helpful appendices.

This work is an index, not the indexed books and articles. But if you find something referenced that would be useful to you, copies can be borrowed from — or

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photocopied for a reasonable price by — the American Philatelic Society's Research Library, or possibly from another philatelic library closer to you.

1¢ MISSING OVERPRINT

The three pairs of 1¢ Kansas-Nebraska overprints shown with this column illustrate the danger of relying upon printed references.

Two genuine single stamps also are pictured.

The vertical pair was listed on eBay as a fake, although the error does exist. These occurred because the bottom horizontal row of one sheet was missed due to a misplacement of the sheet when the overprint was applied. So, there should be 20 such pairs. A mint pair of the error (Scott 658a) is valued at \$300 in the 2016 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*.

The two horizontal pairs came from a different source. Genuine examples could not exist, and no such error is listed in Scott. I got them to include in my reference collection of fakes. This sort of collection is a key resource that almost every expert builds and maintains.

The three pairs are dangerous because the first step in determining if a Kansas-Nebraska overprint is fake or genuine is finding whether the overprints are printed on the correct stamps.

That is, the stamps should have vertically ribbed gum with a specific type of horizontal gum breaker. Two of the pairs pass with flying colors. The third has disturbed gum,



Genuine examples of the Kansas-Nebraska overprints.

but seems to be close to the standard.

The next step is to look at the overprint.

Are the dimensions proper? Is the impression correct? Is there evidence of the overprint on the back of the stamp?

Third, compare the letters and the period in the overprint and their placement to the

known counterfeits.

In this case, we also need to check to see if the patients (stamps that are candidates for expertizing) are known varieties or something being put forward as a new error?

To make a long story short, all three pairs are fakes.

The vertical gum ribbing on the vertical pair, on close examination, has been faked. That is why the gum appears to be disturbed. So that one can ruled out as possibly genuine.

As I already noted, the two horizontal pairs are not known in that form, and it would be extremely difficult for the production process to have produced them. That is strike one.

Strikes two and three come from a close examination of the overprints, though they could fool an amateur.

With some characteristics of the stamp and overprint matching the standard or being close, the owners might have been tempted to let hope triumph over reality, and to put the stamps in his or her album, as genuine.

21ST IN SERIES

This is the 21st article in the series on expertizing that began in March 2014. At a recent stamp show, I was asked if the series might be released as a pamphlet. There is no plan to do so at this time. One reason is that I'm not close to running out of subject matter.

I suggest that those wanting access to the earlier articles subscribe to *Linn's* online because the website to which you gain access has back issues that cover the time period in which the expertizing columns have appeared. ■

Questions about stamp identification and color

Linn's readers ask for help in understanding the principles of identification and in determining what color a stamp is when the same design is produced in various similar colors.

Linn's readers have reacted to my expertizing columns, and I appreciate receiving questions and observations from you because this really is your column. In that spirit, let's look at some of the mail.

Ed Bednar of Accokeek, Md., wrote about a 2¢ Washington stamp: "I recently bought an estate stamp collection from a former stamp dealer. In the collection is a stamp that was designated as A140, 2¢ Washington, perf 12x11-1/2, type IV. There is no such listing for that type of perforation but I have measured the perfs and it appears to me to be exactly that. Others have measured it and come to the same conclusion."

There are two aspects that need to be dealt with in answering this question: One is the production of the stamp; the other is how a normal stamp might have been altered.

Scott Type A140 is correct, but there were two printing processes used to produce these stamps: engraving and offset. It is the latter that has design Types IV through VII, and all of these are perforated gauge 11 by 11. So, I believe the stamp under discussion is probably Scott 406, the engraved, perforated 12 by 12 stamp of 1912.

The offset-printed stamps are chalky-looking in color and less distinct in design compared to the engraved issues. And if the offset-printed stamps had been produced with gauge-12 perforations, examples would have been discovered a long time ago.

That leaves three possibilities in diagnosing the stamp: someone took an imperforate version of the offset Type IV stamp (Scott 532) and added fake perforations; it is the aforementioned Scott 406 that has been reperfected to hide flaws or a straightedge; or it is a normal variety due to paper shrinkage.

The reperforation would have to match on both vertical edges. As there would not normally be a need to do both edges, I lean toward the normal variety theory.

The Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* lists perforations in this era to the closest ½ millimeter. But stamps are not always like that. Take a handful of these stamps and measure with a perforation gauge that includes tenths, and



On the left is an engraved printing of the 2¢ Washington stamp, Scott design type A140. Note the crisp design elements and the richness of the color, compared to the offset version at right.



On the left is the orange-brown color of the 1851 imperforate 3¢ Washington stamp, Scott 10, as compared to Scott 11, in dull red.

you will see some slight variation. This is not only due to the inexact gauge-12 perforation measurement in the catalog, but also due to shrinkage of the paper in production.

For the engraving process, the paper was wetted down so it could be pressed into the incised lines of the plate and pick up the ink in those lines. As the paper dried, minor shrinkage could occur.

While normally the drying was complete by the time the perforations were added, it is possible that this did not always happen, and the result would be some slight variation in the final perforation measurement.

Bottom line: The stamp is interesting and collectible, but one that is possibly faked; and even if genuine, it is not of great significance.

COLOR PROBLEMS

Todd Hause has a frustration that I'm sure many collectors share.

This is how he explains it: "As a collector of 19th century U.S. stamps, stationery and postal

history, one area that has and continues to plague me, perhaps more than any other area of identification, is Color. I used to think I had a pretty good eye for color and then I started collecting stamps. I now own six or more different color guides that vary in cost from ten to a hundred dollars each. To make matters worse, the colors in and between these guides are as varied as the item I seek to identify.

"This leads me to my question. 'How does an expertizer determine the color of a stamp or envelope?'"

By way of answering, let's first stipulate that the task of an expertizer is to determine whether a patient (the stamp being examined) does or does not match a given color — normally one that is listed in the catalog and within our experience. Thus, strictly speaking, we are not "determining color" except in a very narrow sense.

In fact, in 30-plus years as an expertizer, I can't recall a single patient that came in with the question, "What color is this?"

The type of question I'm most likely to get is: "Is this 3¢ imperf 1851 Washington a Scott 10 (orange brown), or Scott 11 (dull red)?" The former has a significantly higher catalog value. (I am intentionally blurring the differences between Scott 10 and 10A and Scott 11 and 11A, as they are not for the most part germane to color.)

In dealing with the color question, we first need to come to a conclusion that the stamp submitted really is an imperforate example, and not an 1857 example with its perforations cut away.

Then we need to consider the fact that genuine Scott 10 stamps have to be from a certain plate, while the Scott 11 stamps were printed from different plates with different characteristics, so being able to plate these stamps is a good checkpoint.

As to color, I would compare the patient against known examples in my reference collection, and against the R.H. White *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps* (1981). This work includes

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This color plate from the R.H. White *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Stamps* (1981) shows why this reference is the gold standard for determining colors of early U.S. stamps.

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color plates that are the gold standard for identifying colors on U.S. stamps. A sample of one of the color plates for Scott 10 is shown nearby.

In 95 percent of the cases, the answer is clear, but there are occasional stamps where color clarity is not to be had because the stamp has been altered on purpose or by accident. I think of the latter as “weathered,” such as prolonged exposure to sunlight or having had a mug of coffee spilled on it.

If a stamp has been altered, that has to be noted on the expertizer’s worksheet. And the determination of what catalog number it might be is a judgment call.

The rule of thumb for expertizers is that the stamp should be identified as the least expensive (most common) variety of the possibilities, unless the expertizer is certain otherwise.

But in those rare cases where there is no alteration and the color is not clear, and the plating is not clear as well, the expertizer has to decline an opinion as the standard has to be 100-percent certainty.

This is where there is special value in the team approach to expertizing, because having more than one pair of eyes on the patient can yield additional information.

Keep those cards and letters coming to me, John Hotchner, Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125; and e-mails at jmhstamp@verizon.net. ■

Color misregistrations; recommended code of ethics

Minor color misregistrations, a hazard of multicolor printing of modern United States stamps, can sometimes lead to startling visual results.

What should be expertized? For starters, any item that is being suggested as a possible new addition to the catalog should be expertized.

Over the last few years, I've had two questions come up where the finder thought that a new listing might be in order. In each case, though, the item turned out to be a collectible variety, not a new listing, and the finder was disappointed.

The patients (the stamps being expertized) are shown nearby together with the normal stamps. The patients are the 13¢ Iowa "double eagle" stamp from the State Flags issue of 1976 and the "white tree branch" variety of the 1984 Smokey Bear 20¢ commemorative.

In both instances, what we have is a color misregistration.

On the normal Iowa stamp (Scott 1661, the eagle, which appears to be brown, actually is comprised of several red dots and a few blue dots on top of a black eagle image.

The "double eagle" was caused by the red being shifted down about 1 millimeter, leaving the black and blue in their normal positions. This is a minor printing variety with a major outcome, easily confirmed by looking at how close the bottom of the red vertical bar of the flag is to the black inscription. The red is much closer to the "1776-1976" inscription on the "double eagle" variety than on the normal stamp.

On the Smokey Bear commemorative, the brown and black shading of the tree branch is shifted left, leaving it outside the intended white space where it is properly placed on the normal example.

Color misregistrations are an ever-present hazard of multicolor printing. They exist on the early U.S. bicolor stamps in profusion, but they also often are found on more recent multicolor, multi-process stamps when several plates — sometimes connected to differing printing processes — have been used.

In addition, they are epidemic on certain modern-era U.S. stamps printed when the Bureau of Engraving and Printing was experimenting with new equipment and processes.

The Smokey Bear commemorative is a good



Color misregistrations can alter stamp designs, as illustrated by the two stamps shown here. On top is the 1976 Iowa state flag, with a "double eagle," shown with a normal example. Below are two 1984 Smokey Bear stamps: a normal example and one that appears to have a white tree branch.

example. Among the many other examples are the 1967 Canada Centenary 5¢ (Scott 1324), the 1972 Olympics Games set (1460-1462), the 1972 Tom Sawyer 8¢ (1470), and the 1975 D.W. Griffith 10¢ (1555).

In fact, the Canada Centenary stamp is not easy to find in perfect registration. An almost perfect example is shown nearby to the right of the plate block; but even here, the dark blue (intended to represent rivers) is shifted

slightly to the right.

On the stamps in the plate block, the dark blue is shifted up 2 millimeters, leaving an additional white strip (maybe snow?) below it.

But that's not the most unusual outcome. The shifted dark blue is accompanied by the shifted black lettering that was printed by the same plate, causing an unintentional design change. Note that the "Canada 1867-1967" is now above the frame of the design.

But the plate block tells the tale. You can see that the black plate number (which represents the dark blue and black plate) is shifted up.

STAMP DEALERS AND EXPERT CERTIFICATES

In this column in the May 18 issue of *Linn's*, I discussed the possibility of a dealer code of ethics to govern the dealer-customer relationship when stamps or covers being sold need to be expertized.

Auctioneers have developed standards and practices that they publish in their catalogs, but there has been no equivalent for most retail dealers. It was left to each dealer to make his own rules — sometimes customer friendly, sometimes not. Some dealers simply made up rules as they went.

Into this maze stepped Mark Reasoner, president of the American Stamp Dealers Association. He and his hardworking board of directors have crafted a recommended policy that was recently announced, and I am pleased to present it here, word for word, so that collectors will have it:

"Scope: This policy of the American Stamp Dealers Association, Inc. is applicable to member's retail sales of individual stamps, sets, or covers. It is expected that auction houses will have and make known their policies regarding certification.

"As a minimum recommended policy, members may, at their discretion, enact policies that offer additional terms provided they are no less favorable to the buyer. As this is a recommended policy, no complaint against a member for violation of this policy

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may be considered by the ASDA unless the member seller has published or otherwise made known their acceptance of this policy.

"Minimum recommended certification policy for retail dealers:

"1. The buyer is to notify the seller, at time of purchase, that item(s) will be submitted for certification. The notice shall be in writing.

"2. The buyer is to submit the item(s), after it is paid in full, to a mutually agreed upon expertising service.

"3. The buyer is to notify the seller of the certification results within 90 days from date of purchase. If no notification is received by the seller, the sale is deemed final. If the certification results have not been released by the certification service within 90 days, it is within the seller's discretion to grant additional time. The request for additional time and the granting of such shall be in writing.

"4. In the event of an adverse opinion due to improper identification and/or due to condition or alterations not previously mentioned by the seller, the purchase price and certification costs, upon documentation, shall be refunded by the seller to the buyer. There will be no refunds for a differing opinion



The 1967 Canada Centennial stamps in the plate block have a color misregistration to such a degree that there appears to be a snow field below the dark blue river, and the inscription "Canada 1867-1967" is above the design. A normal example is shown at right.

based upon grading, whether numerical (e.g. 90) or traditional (e.g. F-VF).

"5. Condition is defined as the physical state of the stamp and includes, but is not limited to, thins, tears, stains, scrapes, and oxidation.

"6. Alteration is defined as the process of making changes in appearance or form to enhance the value of the stamp, and includes,

but is not limited to, reperforating, regumming, trimming of perforations, and altering the design."

I recommend that you clip this and keep it with your want list. In your dealings with dealers, you can ask if they adhere to the recommended policies. I hope that you will find that most do. ■

Expertizing something that doesn't exist

Over the years, expertization certificates have been issued for color shades and paper varieties that later were deemed never to have really existed and were delisted by catalogs.

It isn't often I get a belly laugh out of a letter from a reader, let alone one on the subject of expertizing. But John Burns from Stevensville, Mich., did it with the following missive:

"Many decades ago I collected Germany and specialized in the inflation issues. I don't remember the Michel number or the post office which issued this particular sheet. I was a member of the Germany Philatelic Society and had stamps expertized through them.

"They would send my grouping to a German expertizer, by name of Schulze. He would stamp the back of each stamp, whether mint or used, with his personalized stamp.

"Anyway ... this one issue had three shades according to Michel. The 'c' shade was rather rare and identifiable only by the marginal marking, which would indicate which post office had issued any one particular stamp. I had a mint plate block, upper left, with full margins. It came back marked 'c' and with Schulze's mark.

"A few years later, Michel removed this particular shade from the catalog with the explanation that the shade had never really been a shade. So I had an expertized block of something that didn't officially exist.

"I am left with the conclusion that shades and colors, like beauty, exist only in the eye(s) of the beholder."

This problem is not unique to Germany. An example from the United States is the early (1909) Washington-Franklin stamps on so-called China clay paper.

There are a good many certificates out there saying that the China clay paper version is genuine. However, some years ago, technical studies determined that such stamps were simply a variant of the bluish papers (that are actually grayish-blue — made from 35-percent rag stock instead of all wood pulp) listed in the Scott catalog (Scott 357-366), and so, Scott removed the China clay paper listings.

Another possible candidate for delisting is Scott C23c, the 1938 6¢ Eagle Holding Shield airmail stamp with an ultramarine frame. Scott describes the normal variety of this stamp, C23, as having a blue frame. As for the ultramarine shade, partisans swear it exists.



Perf 12, double-line USPS watermarked versions of the Washington-Franklin series stamps printed on experimental bluish paper were issued in 1909. A 1¢ bluish paper stamp is shown on this postcard. For many years, there also were listings in the Scott catalog for a China clay version. Later, the China clay paper version was proven not to exist, even though there were examples expertized as such.

Others swear just as vehemently that it does not, saying that it is some sort of changeling. I have never seen one, so I have no opinion, but it is not a settled matter.

The editors of Scott, and other catalogs, generally have to see a variety in person and have a confirming expertizing certificate before they will list. So I don't doubt that one or both of those requirements were met before Scott C23c was listed. But I also have no doubt that, as with the China clay paper, new information can result in changes.

'CLEAN'

A *Linn's* reader who wishes to remain anonymous has asked what the description "clean" means, and how it relates to expertizing?

Generally, this description is applied to covers, and means that the cover in question is in prime shape for the type of cover it is. That may vary. We don't expect a Civil War prisoner of war cover to be in perfect shape, but it could be considered clean if free of



This 1938 6¢ airmail stamp, Scott C23, is described in the Scott catalog as "dark blue & carmine" for the normal issue. Also listed is C23c, described as "ultramarine & carmine." Having never seen the latter, I can't say that it exists, but it is a disputed listing.

major flaws and would be a desirable addition for all but the most fastidious of collectors.

In the expertizing world, "clean" is not a description that is seen on certificates; it is not specific enough. If there are flaws, they need to be described in detail on the certificate.

However, it is a term that expertizers use

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This United States Columbian cover is what stamp expertizers might call “too clean,” as explained in the accompanying article.



The lettering used in the circular datestamp did not exist at the time the letter on the other side of this folded cover was dated (1862), but that is only the start of the problems this fake presents.

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among themselves, most often in combination with the word “too,” as in “too clean.” This refers not to condition or desirability so much as to the physical appearance and genuineness of the cover — and it is not a compliment.

Two examples shown with this column are both too clean, and both are fakes. They are too perfect to the eye; the cancellations are too sharp; and the paper is of a quality that is uncharacteristic of the purported period of use.

In the case of the cover with the 1893 2¢ Columbian stamp (Scott 232), I am no expert on typewriters, but the typing is so clear as to be made by a machine more commonly seen well into the 20th century.

The 1862 stampless cover was done using ink that is darker and richer than handwriting or cancellations of the period.

I’ll add another item that is illustrative. While postmasters often tried to get a fancy or geometric cancellation smack on 19th-century stamps, the checkerboard cancellation on the Franklin stamp shown nearby is too perfect, and the ink is suspect as well.

When I first saw this item, it was offered as an 1861 30¢ orange (Scott 71). The color is right, but the stamp is wrong. Because the “cancellation” pretty much obliterates the stamp, a quick look could mislead the viewer.

A closer look at the bottom of the stamp reveals that it is an 1875 1¢ Franklin Official with “Specimen” overprint (Scott O15). It is not only the wrong color, because the 1¢ Franklin postage stamp is blue, but the word “specimen” has been blocked out as part of the cancellation, too.

The lesson is that we need to be skeptical of the too perfect. Such an item can be genuine, but often it is not. ■



A quick look at the color of this cancellation-obstructed stamp design might lead one to believe it is an 1861 30¢ stamp, but closer examination reveals that it is an 1875 1¢ Franklin Official.

Changed colors from offset and gravure printing

The processes used to print modern postage stamps can make it appear that a color is missing when it is not. Looking at the stamps under strong magnification can provide clues.

It is often said that an expertizing certificate is an essential when considering purchase of a stamp (or postal stationery item) represented to be a missing color. In the last couple of weeks, *Linn's* readers have provided some excellent examples of why this is so.

To qualify as a missing color, every bit of the color must be missing. Disappearing color, as with the intaglio black in the right-hand stamp in the 1982 20¢ International Peace Garden pair (Scott 2014) shown nearby, does not meet the standard. Nor does "almost completely missing" as illustrated by the 1988 36¢ Sikorsky airmail stamp pictured in the U.S. Stamp Notes expertization column in the Sept. 21, 2015, *Linn's*.

Questions from readers raise another aspect of the missing color problem, one that is even more difficult for the collector and the expertizer to deal with.

If you look at the Sikorsky or the International Peace Garden stamps through a sufficiently powerful magnifier, you can tell if the color is present or if it isn't.

But what about colors that are so different from the normal that it would appear that one of the colors that was used to make up the correct shade must be missing?

A prime example can be seen on the two 1990 \$2 Bobcat stamps (Scott 2482) shown nearby, graphically cropped from their cover. Look especially at the branch upon which the bobcat is stretched out and the attached leaves.

On the bottom stamp, the normal example, the branch is dark gray-green and the leaves are green. On the top stamp, the branch and leaves are brown. The person who found the cover thought the top stamp might be the missing black listed in the Scott catalog.

There are two reasons why it isn't. First, a careful reading of the catalog discloses that the missing black is the engraved black, not the lithographic black found in the branch and the bobcat. Secondly, what seems to be missing is the green coloring of the branch and leaves.

Here is where it gets complicated. The colors used to print the Bobcat stamp, besides the intaglio and lithographic black, were magenta, yellow, and cyan (blue). Each had its own plate, which printed the color as a dot pattern.



The details in the rose are missing on the right-hand example of this 1992 International Peace Garden stamp, but because the intaglio black is not entirely missing, it is only a startling freak, not an error.



Notice the different colors of the branch and leaves on the two Bobcat stamps in this graphically cropped part of a registered mail cover. The top stamp seems to be missing a color, but it is only a problem in the application of the blue ink that was used to make up the green of the branch and leaves.

The human eye cannot see the dot pattern without a magnifier, but with one, preferably at 30x, you can see that the coloring of the branch and leaves are a combination of the magenta, yellow and cyan.

Any color of the rainbow (as seen by the human eye) can be produced in a stamp design by those dots laid on top of one another. Variables include how many dots to the square inch, how much ink is in each dot, and the pattern of dots used.

In the case of the brown branch on the top Bobcat stamp, the yellow and magenta are normal, but the blue-ink dots are light and partially missing. Without them, the intended gray-green and green elements of the design are flawed. This is not considered to be error even though the final design seems to be missing the desired green. Why? Because the blue ink is not totally missing. Again, this can be verified under 30x magnification.

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It is certainly collectible, but Scott does not list such varieties. This is partially because for the sake of the size of the catalog the editors must limit the number of production flaws listed by restricting them to errors. In addition, though such unintended varieties can be seen by the human eye, they are not really significant.

In fact, most stamps printed using dot patterns (often by modern offset methods and by photogravure) have a range of normal. Look at a random group of Bobcat stamps, and you will see what I mean. While the Bobcat example we are discussing is beyond the normal range, it is still just a curiosity, not an error.

Another color variety example is the 1974 10¢ ZIP Code definitive (Scott 1511). The stamp was printed by the photogravure process on the Andreotti press. It is listed by Scott with yellow omitted (1511a), and a note in the catalog warns to beware of stamps with the yellow chemically removed.

Examples that seemed to be missing the yellow were submitted to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1978, and in a letter



The ZIP Code definitive stamps of 1974 were gravure printed using yellow, cyan, magenta and black inks, each from a separate plate. The example at left is normal. The stamp on the right appears to be missing the yellow, but it is a light print, according to an examination by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

dated May 9, 1978, the BEP gave the following opinion: "This issue of postage stamps was produced by a four-color rotogravure printing process. By this process, all colors are reproduced by printing the correct proportions of the three primary colors (yellow, magenta, and cyan) and black. Microscopic examinations of the submitted stamps showed the presence of a lighter-than-normal yellow impression on all five stamps. This light yellow impression also

caused the green areas to appear more blue and the orange area to appear more red.

"A lighter-than-normal impression on a gravure printed stamp is usually caused by the washing of a printing cylinder while the press is running. Stamps printed during this washing operation are later removed from the web [and destroyed]. The yellow ink used in the production of this stamp is also susceptible to fading by exposure to strong ultraviolet radiation, and this may have the same effect on the colors on the stamp."

Such explanatory letters from the Bureau are a great aid in understanding the workings of the presses. Unfortunately, the private printers that the United States Postal Service now uses generally don't answer inquiries about varieties in their products, since to do so would add cost to the contract. But I would appeal to *Linn's* readers who have been able to get answers, or who have BEP letters of explanation, to share them with me for possible use in future columns.

Contact me, John Hotchner, by snail mail at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125, or by email at jmhstamp@verizon.net. ■

How many experts does it take?

More is not always better. Sometimes, only one expert is all that is needed to quickly determine if a stamp, cover, or a supposed error is not what it appears to be.

How many experts does it take to reach a valid conclusion about any given patient?

One expertizing service trumpets as a positive that it requires that three experts examine every patient (a stamp or cover submitted for authentication). In my view, this is an appropriate standard for many, maybe even most, patients, but excessive for others.

If a service wishes to expend resources regardless of cost, that is its privilege. But many submissions for expertizing are not genuine on their face, and it takes only one qualified expert to make that judgment.

For the rest, multiple experts looking at the patient is a good thing, and I don't know of any expertizing service that does not devote the needed resources to assure that the opinions rendered are at a high level of excellence.

Shown nearby is an example of a bad patient that can be readily and conclusively identified by a single expert. This first-day cover is a Rice cachet produced for the 4½¢ Presidential series stamp issued July 11, 1938 (Scott 809).

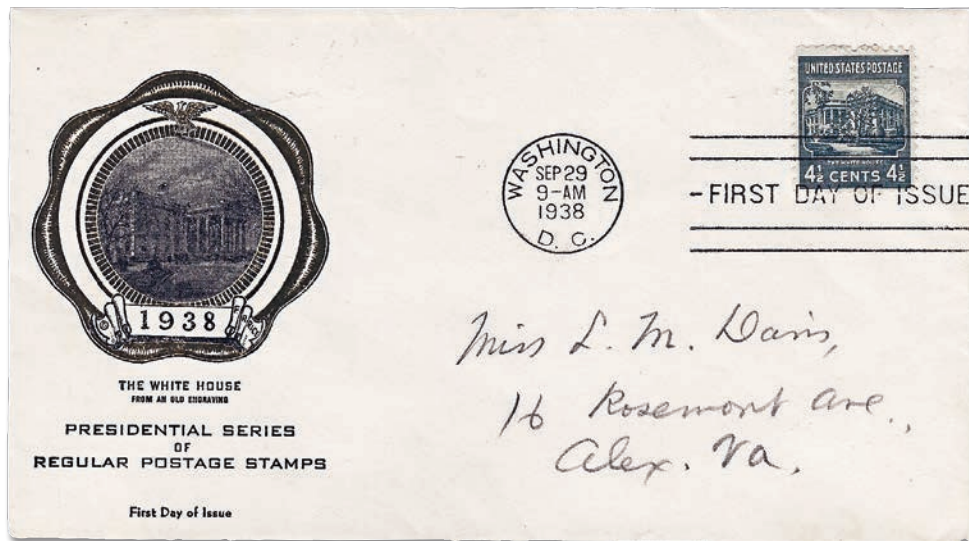
The cachet is genuine. The stamp is genuine. The cancellation is genuine. But the cancel date is Sept. 29, 1938, the issue date for the \$2 Prexie. This little gem was discovered by 4½¢ stamp scholar Stanley Christmas from Texas.

My guess is that the person who sent this in for cancellation had the uncanceled cover and missed the date by which it had to be sent for servicing. So the next best thing would be to get a later genuine first-day cancellation. Who would ever notice the difference in date?

The next question is: Why would the post office cancel a cover with the wrong stamp? Well, given that a clerk is feeding covers into the machine rapidly, it probably was not noticed. And, if the clerk did notice, the stamp on the cover more than paid the correct rate. So, the easy thing to do would be to cancel it and send it on its way.

I can't imagine that this is the only time this sort of thing has happened. Over the years I have seen a good many covers that went through the machine with no stamp at all!

But for our purposes here, the fact is that this cover is not a genuine 4½¢ stamp FDC, and it does not take three experts to make that



A Rice cachet is a nice addition to a Presidential series first-day cover. In this case, the cachet, stamp and cancel are all genuine. What could an expertizer find that would label this FDC as not genuine?



These 1991 Wood Duck singles from booklet panes are noticeably different. The stamp on the left is genuine and normal. The stamp on the right is also genuine, but altered to make it look like a color-missing error.

determination unless the first two didn't notice the wrong date, which is highly improbable.

Let's look at another example, one that is more commonly seen. In the nearby illustration of two 1991 29¢ Wood Duck stamps (Scott 2484), the example on the left is normal, and the example on the right is supposedly missing the brown color in the duck's body.

To a competent expert, this screams "fake." There is no listing in Scott for such an error. That, of course, is not fatal. New discoveries are possible.

However, there are four other factors that make this patient problematic.

First, under 30-power magnification, it can be seen that no colors are completely omitted.

Second, other colors have been affected

by whatever bleached out the red and yellow that combine to make up the brown. Note especially the normal red duck bill and the red eye. They are washed out in the fake.

Not so easily seen is that the green in the head is bright on the normal, and quite flat on the fake. Further, the background white paper on the fake is much whiter than on the genuine, and looking at the stamp under long-wave ultraviolet light reveals that the tagging has been altered by whatever method was used to try to bleach out the red and yellow.

The bottom line is that it is not an error, nor is it just a light print of the yellow and red. It is a stamp that has been altered to make it appear that it is an error. One expert who knows what he or she is dealing with can make that determination. And the moment this determination is made, no additional experts are needed. In such cases, the decision of an expertizing service not to employ additional experts has nothing whatsoever to do with maximizing profits.

Much of each packet of material I get to expertize is easily determined as fake; on average as much as a quarter. The remainder will profit from analysis by more than one expert,

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but subjecting the easily determined fake to additional scrutiny delays the opinion getting back to the submitter and wastes resources.

NEW RESOURCE FOR CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA COLLECTORS

Self-education is the best way to avoid paying for expertizing. Often, the cost of the book or pamphlet is more than made up for by being able to be a smarter purchaser and by being able to determine what really does or does not need expertizing.

Confederate States collectors have an excellent new resource: *Confederate States of America Philatelic Fakes, Forgeries, and Fantasies of the 19th and 20th Centuries* by Peter W.W. Powell and John L. Kimbrough.

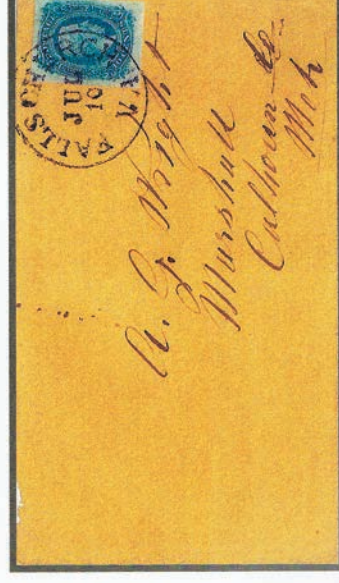
This 430-page hardcover book is a comprehensive treatment encompassing both stamps and covers and including a multitude of color illustrations.

The stamp section leads off with the history of the ubiquitous facsimiles often seen in United States collections, and is then organized by the known fakes and counterfeits of general-issue stamps, with additional chapters on perforated and rouletted stamps.

Covers and cancels are then dealt with in alphabetical order according to city and town name. As an example, I turned to Falls Church, Va., where I live, and found the cover shown here. The description printed in the illustration continues with this additional detail:

Falls Church, Virginia

Falls Church, Va, was established as a post office in 1851. Falls Church is located in Fairfax County in northern Virginia. The town's very close proximity to Washington, DC, kept the town in Union hands throughout the war. There are no recorded Confederate postal uses from this location.



Fake Falls Church Cover – Unknown Origin (PF)

Is this Falls Church, Va., cover genuine, or is it fake? A new book on Confederate fakes, forgeries and fantasies provides the answer, along with 430 pages of well-researched information and color illustrations on other Confederate States of America material.

"The cover illustrated above has an Archer & Daly Type I stamp tied by a Falls Church, Va. postmark. The cover looks very good and could easily pass as a genuine Confederate cover at first glance. However, it is an impossible use as there can be no Confederate mail from that area in 1863 or 1864. Furthermore, the address is to a town in Michigan. The American Stampless Cover Catalog lists a 32mm Falls Church postmark used pre-war but does not illustrate it. This could either be a very cleverly altered pre-war cover or a total fabrication."

The book can be ordered from Peter W.W. Powell, 5502 Cary Street Road, Richmond, VA 23226. The cost is \$95, postpaid within the United States. ■

If it's too good to be true, it probably isn't genuine

Previously unreported varieties start the expertizing process under a cloud. Applying knowledge of production processes and expected results often disproves the claim.

There is no shortage of interesting material out there to tempt collectors who are drawn to the unusual. However, much of this material is not what it is represented to be.

Fortunately for both beginners in the hobby and those who have some experience under their belt, there are expertizing houses that serve the philatelic community that can help you sort out the bad apples from the good.

The major philatelic expertizing organizations in the United States are the Philatelic Foundation (PF, New York, N.Y., website www.philatelicfoundation.org), the American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX, Bellefonte, Penn., <http://stamps.org/stamp-authentication>), Professional Stamp Experts (PSE, Newport Beach, Calif., <http://gradingmatters.com>), and Philatelic Stamp Authentication and Grading Inc. (PSAG, Melbourne, Fla., www.stampauthentication.com).

Two items that illustrate the problem have recently crossed my desk. Both were represented as unlisted fabulous finds. It turns out that there are good reasons why they are unlisted — and unlistable.

The more recent of the two items is a top margin pair of the 20¢ Treaty of Paris commemorative issued Sept. 2, 1983 (Scott 2052). The horizontal perforations are shifted up on a slight diagonal. This creates for the bottom stamp what is called a “design change misperf” because the text which should be below the illustration is now above the picture of the treaty signing. A normal stamp is shown for comparison.

But it is the top stamp in the pair that is more interesting. There is not a hint of the black descriptive text, and it would appear to be a black color-missing error, due to the misperforation. There was a time not so long ago when such an error would not have been listed. But Scott changed its policy starting with the 2003 *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* and now lists misperf-caused missing colors.

Yet this error is not listed in the most recent, 2016 Scott U.S. Specialized. And here is why.

Unlike some other commemoratives of this era produced by combination presses that



Treaty of Paris 1783

US Bicentennial 20 cents



Treaty of Paris 1783

US Bicentennial 20 cents



Treaty of Paris 1783

US Bicentennial 20 cents

Issued in 1982, this 20¢ Treaty of Paris commemorative is shown in its normal form at the bottom. Above it is a top margin pair of misperfs, showing a design change misperf, and a potential missing-black error at the top. The key fact in determining genuineness is the type of printing for this issue.

applied offset and intaglio colors to the same stamp, the Treaty of Paris stamp was printed on the seven-color Andreotti gravure press.

Only four color stations were used: yellow, magenta, cyan (blue), and black. All the black in this stamp — and there is some in the illustrated picture — was done from a single gravure black plate, meaning that the black

color that has been cut off by the misperf did not affect the still-present black color in the illustration. Thus, this is not a color-missing error, though it might be represented as such by even honest dealers and collectors who don't know precisely what they are dealing with, opting instead for what they wish it might be.

A trip to an expertizing service would soon get this item described correctly as “text removed by misperforation, but photogravure black present in the painting.” In other words, it is freak of moderate value; collectible, but not a big-bucks item.

10¢ VERTICAL COIL

The second item is a vertical coil strip of four of the 10¢ Benjamin Franklin from the Third Bureau Issue of 1908-1922. You will look in the Scott catalog in vain for this stamp. There is a horizontal coil of the 10¢ Franklin (Scott 497), perforated vertically gauge 10.

The example shown is indeed perf 10, so it most likely began its life as the single-line watermarked perf 10 sheet stamp issued in 1914 (Scott 433). There



Strips of four coils are unusual, and this strip of 10¢ Franklins from the Third Bureau Issue is impressive on first look despite the fact that there is no Scott listing for a vertical coil of this stamp. Detailed examination suggests it is a well-done fake. The stamp at the bottom is the genuine horizontal coil that exists for this issue. Note the color difference.

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was no imperf 10¢ Franklin from which this coil could be made.

Perforating at this time was an inexact science, and these stamps must have had wider than normal margins on one or both sides. It also is possible that one side was a straight edge from the center of a 400-subject sheet. These sheets were guillotined through the imperf central margin into four 100-subject panes for sale at post offices.

Unlike more modern stamps such as the 20¢ Treaty of Paris, where it is still possible to make new discoveries, the book is all but closed on

stamps such as the 10¢ Franklin that are more than 100 years old. It is a safe bet that if it is not listed, it does not exist. If it existed and was issued as a normal mail-use stamp, enough examples would have been created and issued that we would know of it today.

So, the very fact that this is not listed makes it 99.9-percent certain that it is not genuine.

Now, to go a bit further. *Linn's* readers have asked what logical process an expertizer actually goes through when reviewing a stamp or cover submitted for authentication, also called the patient.

The process varies with the patient being

examined, but here is what an expertizer having a chance to review this strip would look at and look for as essential elements in making a determination on genuineness:

1. The presence or absence of a watermark. In this case, there is a clear single-line watermark. If this were a genuine issue, it would most likely be from the same era as Scott 497, the perf 10 horizontal coil, which is unwatermarked.

2. The opposing sides of a coil must be exactly parallel, and exactly the same size from top to bottom. Usually, the patient is much better than most fakes, especially so given that it is four stamps long. While it is

U.S. STAMP NOTES

true that whoever did these was a craftsman, the bottom stamp when carefully measured is a hair wider than the top stamp. In addition, at the very top of the top stamp, the edges flare outward just a smidgen.

3. The 10¢ that does exist as a horizontal coil is rotary printed. The image size for rotary printed vertical coils of the same era is 18.5 to 19 millimeters by 22.5mm. The image size for the stamps in the vertical strip is 18.25mm by 21.5mm. This matches up with the normal flat plate measurements that would be expected for Scott 433.

4. The stamp size from margin to margin on rotary press vertical coils is around 21.5mm.

The side-to-side measurement for this strip is barely 20.5mm. While there can be some variation, a 1mm difference is not a good sign.

5. The colors of Scott 497 and 433 are both

listed in the catalog as "orange yellow," but working with these stamps as expertizers do, means that through experience, we know that Scott 497 is just a bit brighter and tends to a lemony yellow more than orange yellow. See the example of Scott 497 illustrated with the strip. The strip is more characteristic of the color seen on Scott 433.

Putting all this together, my opinion is that this is not genuine.

Of course, I could be wrong. Submitters are always free to come back with additional facts to disprove my opinion.

I invite you to comment, ask questions about expertizing or specific patients, and to discuss real-life expertizing situations you have encountered. Contact me, John

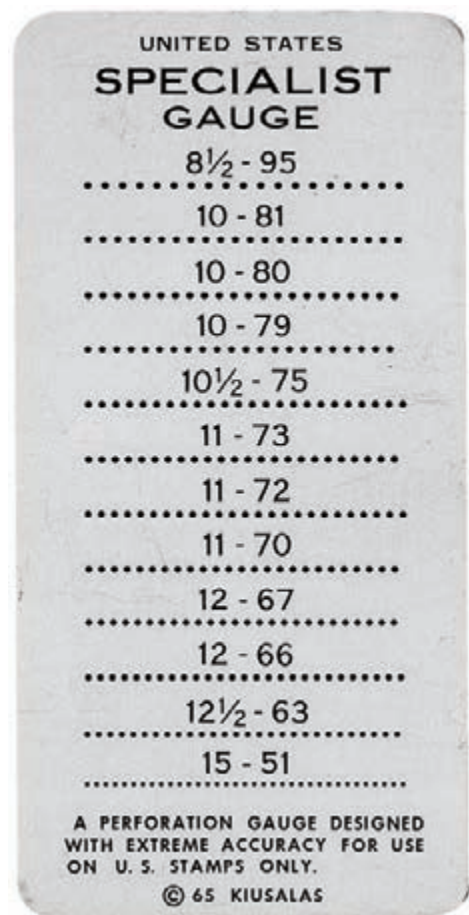
Hotchner, at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125, or by email at jmhstamp@verizon.net. ■

Specialty perforation gauge for U.S. stamps

Ask for what you want. If you have specific questions in mind when submitting a stamp or cover for expertization, include them on the form. They provide helpful guidance for the expertizer.

You can't assume that you will get the information you want when you ask for an expertizing certificate. You need to ask for specifics. A recent reader inquiry highlights this problem:

"Is there any expertizing service that uses the Kiusalas specialized perforation gauge, and if they do, is there any such service that can give these measurements on a certificate if requested?"



This specialist perforation gauge was invented by Richard Kiusalas in the mid-1960s. It is a useful tool for the expertizer of United States stamps because it measures in tenths of an inch, and provides more precise measurements than the standard perforation gauges available to most stamp collectors. Note the three different perf 10, three different perf 11, and two different perf 12 measurements.

This is a simple question, with an answer that has a bit of complexity.

First, you need to know that the Kiusalas Specialist Gauge (hereafter referred to as the K-gauge), copyrighted in 1965, was designed by Richard Kiusalas to measure more precisely all perforations that occurred on United States stamps up to that point.

The standard perforation gauge that we all use has a single measurement in half millimeters, representing the number of holes in a 2-millimeter space. Kiusalas developed a method that allowed measurement of the distance between the center of one perforation hole to the center of the next, in thousandths of an inch.

This recognizes that U.S. perforating equipment has always been constructed to specifications in fractions of an inch.

For example, a gauge 10 perforation on our usual gauge has three different K-gauge measurements, each tied to specific issues:

10-79, used on all flat plate stamps, 1914-1917, and also found on 1923 rotary press stamps;

10-80, first used in 1915 on rotary coils, used on 1923 rotary issue and coil waste stamps, and still in use at the time the K-gauge was released;

10-81, almost the same as 10-80, but not seen after 1926.

You can see how this level of specificity can be helpful in evaluating whether a given stamp has genuine or altered, or added perforations.

Now to the question. So far as I am aware, no expertizing house requires the use of the K-gauge, but I can guarantee that it is an important resource for those of us who expertise 19th- and 20th-century U.S. stamps.

I will often cite K-gauge measurements in my explanatory notes supporting an opinion, but I could not guarantee that the expertizing house staff members will cite those numbers in the certificate, especially when the K-gauge proves the stamp to be a fake.

Bottom line, if you want K-gauge



The used variety of the Prairie Crab Apple stamp below differs markedly from the normal mint example at top. What happened to cause this phenomenon?

measurements included on your certificate for a U.S. stamp, you must specify that request. However, keep in mind that a fake might not match any K-gauge measurement, or the wrong one. And in that case, there is no point in noting that.

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INFORMATION REQUESTED

Answering the K-gauge question led me to go back to review the last several hundred patients (the stamp or cover submitted for authentication) that I have examined to see what submitters asked about their stamps. The results fall into three categories: nothing, good, and not so helpful.

A surprising number of collectors simply left empty the section labeled, "The following information is desired." Thus, the expertizer is left with no guidance other than the suggested catalog number.

In general, the more specific the entry, the better. For example: "Is the stamp genuine with original gum and NH [never hinged]. Has it been reperforated, repaired or altered in any way?"

A shorter version that covers the same ground is "Properly identified, Fault free, Genuine?"

Another that I liked was "Confirmation of Cat. Number and color in a footnote at the bottom of page 243 in 2016 Scott Specialized (red brown rather than golden brown)."

I would include the following examples in the not-so-helpful category: "Authentic?", "Scott number correct?", "Carmine lake?", "Cancel type?", "Is it real?", and "Value?"

With respect to the single-word question "Value?", don't bother asking. We, the expertizers, don't know, except in a very general sense. We know what the catalog listing says (if it is a listed item). But is that a reliable value? In fact, there are many values for a single item: catalog, auction realization, retail, wholesale, what the owner thinks it should sell for, and what I am willing to pay.

Only a fool would try to wade into those waters by citing a value beyond what is in a recognized reference.

Ultimately, the value depends upon many facets, including the many elements of condition, the number available at a given point in time, how badly I or someone else needs the item, and the number of serious bidders chasing a given lot in a given auction.

NOT ALL EXPERTS EXPERTIZE

Who do the expertizers consult, besides each other? A loaded question, you think? There are people in the hobby who are specialists to such a degree that they would be of limited use to a stable of expertizers. There are others who feel they don't have the time, tools or interest in doing this work.

And yet, they can be truly helpful when an

expertizer trips over something that defies explanation, or presents conflicting evidence that needs another pair of experienced eyes. Such a person is friend Jim Kloetzel, the editor emeritus of the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*. During his many years at that helm of the Scott catalogs, he has seen it all and is an exceptional resource.

Recently a friend sent me the 32¢ Prairie Crab Apple stamp (Scott 3196) from the 1998 Flowering Trees set. Note the wandering green line on the used example. A cursory review left me feeling conflicted. I know of no way in which this kind of variety could be a genuine result of production.

And yet, the stamp's paper looked undisturbed to me. So, I thought, "I'm missing something. Send it to Jim."

Every expertizer needs to have a healthy dose of humility. And Jim contributed to mine with his reply: "I would say that the paper looks VERY disturbed. Here are the ways: The fact that the paper is whiter than that on a normal example is the first clue.

"Check this stamp under both short wave and long wave UV [ultraviolet] light. The tagging is gone! I didn't even know this was possible to create, but I am no chemist. The normal tagging on this stamp seems to be prephosphored paper with a dull yellow green look, but that layer is gone on this stamp, and the result is that the white paper remaining appears very rough compared to the normal stamp.

"Under long wave UV, the paper is very white and displays irregularities. Definitely not normal. Something has been done to this stamp.

"Could it be that whatever chemical was used to remove the tagging also caused the irregularities, including causing some of the ink to 'migrate'? That frame line at the right is not the only ink to be disturbed/moved.

"Other lines have moved to a much lesser degree, and even the ink that remains in the proper places shows disturbances and obvious white breaks. Perhaps whatever chemical was used caused the tagging layer to be removed, some of it sliding and moving the ink when it did so. Then the ink 'reapplied' itself in different locations and ways upon drying.

"Did you notice that the microprinted 'USPS' is missing from this 'patient'? How do we account for this? Long story short: I think it is necessary for you to reconsider your comment that this stamp appears to be undisturbed. This stamp has definitely been worked upon by agent/agents unknown." ■

Questions about dull gum, color-missing error

A letter from a *Linn's* reader about the expertization of the 1982 Madonna and Child booklet stamps with perforation shifts leads to a proposed new catalog listing and a new certificate.

I am surprised by some of the letters generated by this series of columns on expertizing.

The following example refers to the 1982 20¢ State Birds and Flowers issue (Scott 1953-2002):

"I may or may not be having a problem with a well-known dealer, and I was hoping I could get some guidance from you before I trigger any trip-wires. I recently purchased the referenced 50-stamp set, all in mint-never hinged condition.

"They look great in my album, however, in placing them I noted that NONE of them have gum on the reverse. There is no evidence of them being previously soaked, but there is no gum.

"Scott does not list any variation without gum and I was hoping you could shed some light on this. I don't want to accuse the dealer of unethical practices because of my own ignorance. Any thoughts you could share?"

At the time the State Birds and Flowers stamps were issued, quite a number of U.S. stamps, but primarily definitives, were being printed on pregummed paper with so-called "dry" or "dull" gum. No question that it takes a practiced eye to tell that the gum is present and undisturbed, so it is understandable that the letter writer was puzzled.

I checked the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*, but it was not helpful on this point. Neither in the introductory material nor anywhere near the Birds and Flowers set was there a discussion of when the new gum was first used, or how extensively.

For that reason, I passed a copy of the letter on to Jim Kloetzel, who in retirement is still involved in production of the Scott U.S. Specialized catalog, with the title editor emeritus. After looking at the problem, he agreed that some sort of notice should be taken of the dull gum phenomenon to make the catalog more helpful to users. So look for that in a future update.

EXPERTIZING ERROR CORRECTED

Another letter, this one from Mike Wenkel,



Stamps from the 1982 State Birds and Flowers issue have an unusual and confusing feature that isn't evident until a collector turns them over.

highlights a set of expertizing opinions that are completely understandable — and also completely wrong. He also shows how valuable it can be to submit additional information when an opinion is received that the submitter believes is wrong.

Here is Wenkel's letter: "I can use some help on getting a stamp issue resolved. Scott lists color omitted errors that result from perforation shifts. See the attached image of my 1996 32¢ religious Christmas stamp booklet, the 32¢ Paolo de Matteis' Madonna and Child, Scott 3112.

"I claim (and know) that the only engraved portion of this stamp is the black lettering at the bottom. Thus, as the horizontal die cuts are displaced 7 millimeters upward from the normal position between the stamps, this is a misperf that results in the engraved black being missing.

"But all three of the expert services say there is black elsewhere, which isn't the issue. The lettering at the top and the main design have black that is lithographed. So, what do I have to do to get them (APS, PF or PSE) to re-consider?"

The annual *Linn's U.S. Stamp Yearbook* series is my bible for U.S. stamps issued from 1983 to 2010, when the series ended. I went to the 1996 volume, authored by George Amick. Its entries describe the printing for both the sheet and booklet versions of the 32¢ Madonna and Child from Adoration of the Shepherds, by Paolo de Matteis stamp. And, on page 280, it clearly states: "This line [artist name and 'Va. Mus. Of Fine Arts'] of small type is the only engraved element on the stamp. The picture and the word 'CHRISTMAS' are printed by offset."

Apparently, none of the expertizers involved checked this reference, instead assuming all the black on this stamp was produced from a single plate.

Indeed, one would have to ask the question why this is not so? Amick does not answer that question, but I have a theory. Offset printing of the word "CHRISTMAS" worked fine because of the size of the letters. However, offset printing of small letters and numbers

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would not have resulted in the desired crisp rendering of the letters, so intaglio was used to enhance the aesthetics of the stamp.

Having established that Wenkel was correct, what next? As I wrote back to him: "The question I have is whether Scott would list this when what is left after the misperf is less than a full stamp design. In theory, one could take any copy of the stamp from your booklet and make an example that looks like a top row 'missing color' (though it would not be easy to replicate the die cuts). That would not prevent me from certifying it, but I would say that it would be best collected as an intact booklet."

So, I posed the question to Kloetzel, who decides on the addition of missing-color errors to the Scott U.S. Specialized catalog, and he agreed that the missing engraving should be added as a listing to Scott 3112, showing it as the result of a perforation shift.

Next, I talked with Mercer Bristow at the American Philatelic Society's Expertizing Service (APEX). He agreed that if Wenkel resubmitted the booklet, APEX would reverse the previous opinion.

All's well that ends well, but it took a little doing.

I preach the value of philatelic literature in this series of columns on expertizing; especially the reference works on U.S. stamp issues. Yes, they divert some money from filling spaces in my album, but they are absolutely essential to the serious U.S. stamp collector.

Shown nearby are two examples of the



Horizontal die cuts shifted up on the 1996 Madonna and Child booklet (see the arrows) create short stamps in the top row. In this example, the horizontal die cuts are shifted 12 millimeters. A reader commented on a similar example with the die cuts shifted 7mm, and the engraved black text at the bottom is missing due to the die-cut shift. That is a newly certified perf-shift missing-color error, as the other black on the stamp design was printed by offset.



A horizontal perforation shift on the 8¢ Eisenhower stamp cuts off the red and gray-blue "Eisenhower USA" inscription, a cataloged error. The 18¢ Architecture stamps have a similar perforation shift. On first glance, they look like color-missing errors. However, there are bits of the red inscription in the bottom perforations, so they do not qualify.

more routinely seen missing colors caused

by perforation shifts. Both the 1971 8¢ Eisenhower (Scott 1394) and the 18¢ 1981 American Architecture stamps (1928-1929) have perforations shifted 5 millimeters and 6mm high. As a result of this, the 8¢ Eisenhower is entirely missing the gray-blue and red "Eisenhower USA" at the bottom. It is a

catalog-listed error (Scott 1394d).

The 18¢ American Architecture pair is a different kettle of fish. You get extra credit if you noticed that there are bits of the red inscription on the bottom perfs. Thus it is not a color-missing error, which by definition has to be 100 percent missing. It is not catalog listed. Close but no cigar! ■

Is expertizing required? Sometimes the answer is no

There are certain items to look for on the front and back of United States stamps that can immediately rule them out as genuine, so expertization is not needed.

In this monthly column on expertizing, I am presenting 10 situations from the first 100 years of United States issues that can be used to identify a stamp as likely not worth the cost of expertization.

All that is required is that you know what to look for and that you have the following elementary collecting tools: a perforation gauge, a good magnifier (preferably one rated at 20x or higher), and a watermark tray and fluid.

The first example looks like it is an imperforate 1851 1¢ Benjamin Franklin, probably one of the more expensive imperfs. But, in this instance, it is hard to tell which of the six listed types it is because the stamp is cut so close that most of the identifying features are missing. That alone makes it problematic, but when the stamp is turned over, the word “facsimile” is printed across the back.

Always turn over a stamp you are considering buying. Previous owners may have penciled the word “fake,” “repaired,” or some other note.

You may also be surprised at other features you may find. I have a lovely, lightly canceled pair of 1851 12¢ imperfs (Scott 17) that when

turned over reveals that it has been cut from a magazine ad.

Secondly, thins, tears, added perforations, pin holes, repaired gum, and other damage also are visible from the back of a stamp. The stamp may be genuine, but worth only five percent to 10 percent of its catalog value because of the damage.

Sometimes the damage is visible to the naked eye, but more often repairing of high-catalog-value stamps can be seen if you dip the stamp face down in watermark fluid. Flaws show up as darkened areas. Of course, an expertizer will do this, but you can do it for yourself.

The third situation involves stamps that bear a notation on the front that disqualifies them as genuine regular issues. The 6¢ Agriculture Official shown nearby is a good example. When I found it offered as Scott O4, I was surprised. Someone had crudely scratched out the word “specimen.” What is startling is that the genuine specimen actually catalogs far more than Scott O4.

Fourth, you would expect that the reverse doctoring — adding the word “specimen” — would be prevalent. Usually such fakery is poorly done and easily identified. What you



Identified for sale as a 6¢ Agriculture Official, this stamp is actually a specimen overprint. The word “specimen” has been roughly obliterated.

need is the Scott catalog illustration, or a handy auction catalog in color, to be able to compare your candidate with a genuine example.

The fifth situation is the addition of “Kans.” or “Nebr.” to 1922 Fourth Bureau Issue stamps with denominations of 1¢ to 10¢. There are other comparison points, but the first quick check is to look at the overprint. Added overprints often were typed onto the stamp in characters that do not match the original. Also, such typing leaves an impression on the back of the stamp. That impression should not be there because the genuine overprints were put there with a surface-printed rubber mat that left no impression in the stamp paper.

Only if the overprint itself looks genuine, do you need go to the second comparison point, which is close-together vertical gum breakers. They will be present on all genuine Kansas-Nebraskas, because that is the only variety to which the overprints were added.

Sixth, the thickness of the stamp can be a deciding factor in determining if it needs to be expertized. If it feels too thick, beware of the sin of pasting a poor example on top of another stamp to make it look acceptable. This also will be obvious if the stamp is dipped, but

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Shown front and back, this purported 1851 1¢ imperf is marked on the reverse as a “facsimile.”



Kansas and Nebraska overprints were applied on a specific version of the Fourth Bureau issue using surface printing. The first stamp shown here is a fake, with a typed overprint that left an impression in the paper. A genuine example is shown in the center for comparison. Also pictured is the normal gum side of the Kansas-Nebraska overprint with vertical gum breakers.

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you can skip that if you just look carefully.

Two examples are shown nearby. The 1857 5¢ design (Scott 30A) is obvious because the margins are too white and the perforations are the wrong size. Checking perforations is a seventh category of inquiry.

This 5¢ stamp is actually pasted on top of a 1½¢ denomination of the 1922 Fourth Bureau issue, which is perforated gauge 11 by 10½, rather than the perf. 15½ of the normal stamp.

The 1861 12¢ stamp is much more artfully done. It is a cut square, pasted on top of another stamp from the same issue, so the perforations are correct. It has faults, but would still be much more expensive than the damaged 12¢ unimproved by the new backing. Keep in mind that only part of a stamp may be added, such as a new top or a “replacement” corner.

A related problem is do-it-yourself inverts, where the center design has been carefully cut out of a normal example of a stamp and replaced so it resembles an invert. Some excellently crafted do-it-yourself inverts can even be found on contemporary covers. While it may take a practiced naked eye to spot such deceptive handiwork, if you run your thumb over the stamp, you will feel the ridge where the cuts have been made.

Viewing under a good magnifier also can reveal this problem. And of course dipping the stamp will be a dead giveaway.

The eighth category is added perforations

and reperfing in general.

In the first instance, you can often tell if imperfs or straight edges have been perforated because the row of new perfs is not exactly parallel to the perfs on the opposite side of the stamp, because the perforations do not measure exactly the same as perfs on the other side of the stamp (or the perfs on an inexpensive reference example), or because there are perforations on line singles or arrow singles that should not have perforations.

Reperforating to eliminate damaged

perforations has evolved over the years, but earlier attempts, as well as some later ones, will not match the proper perforations exactly. Compare to a low-denomination genuine example to eliminate candidates. Put the candidate on top of a genuine example, and the perforations must match exactly.

In addition, look at the holes. Original holes will have slightly rough edges, and anything printed on a rotary press will have holes that are slightly elongated. Also, a visual check is useful to make certain that the holes are



These two stamps have been “improved” by pasting damaged stamps onto new backs. Worth only a small percentage of their substantial catalog value, they are not even worth the cost of expertizing.

equidistant from one another and consistent in size with the holes on the other edges of the stamp. If the perforations are too smooth, too clean, or too large or small, it is not a good candidate for your stamp album.

The ninth category is the removal of perforations to create imperfs or coils. In most cases, early 20th-century imperfs and coils are more valuable than the same design in the form of sheet stamps. Combine this with the fact that the exact placement of perforations on sheet stamps was an inexact science.

It is no surprise that coils and imperfs are

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Both of these stamps have had perforations removed with scissors to simulate scarcer stamps. Neither would have a prayer of being expertized as genuine because the margins are too small.



A lower value mint stamp with genuine gum can be used as a comparison for higher value stamps being presented as mint. The genuine 2¢ Columbian at left shows that the 15¢ at right is a poor example of regumming.

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often seen that upon examination are found not genuine.

The standard is to collect imperfs in pairs, and that eliminates most monkey business. The same is true for coils under review if there are pairs or longer strips.

However, when singles are presented, there are two tests that you can use to determine if the stamp is likely to be genuine.

First, is the stamp large enough? In cutting off even wide-set perforations to make imperfs and coils, the result is too small to qualify, as shown on the 2¢ William H. Seward stamp of the Alaska-Yukon Exposition issue, even though this example has some margin. Secondly, for coils, the cuts are rarely exactly straight, and exactly parallel, as would be the case for an officially produced coil.

The final category is cleaning and regumming. They often go together, especially when a pen cancel is light enough to be removed. But regumming also can be done when the gum on a mint stamp has been improved after being disturbed by a hinge (or multiple hinges), or when mint stamps have stuck together and been washed to separate them.

If cleaned, the face of the stamp will often be unnaturally white. It may also show up as disturbed under ultraviolet light, especially when compared to an inexpensive example from the same set.

Having a genuine gummed example to use for comparison is a great strategy to counter regumming. Whether the gum has been sprayed on or painted on, it is difficult for the regummer to achieve the exact color, consistency and pattern of genuine gum, though not impossible. Today, the art of regumming has gotten quite professional using gum from genuine low-value stamps to improve higher value stamps.

There is a second test to check that can be used if the area of regumming includes the stamps' perforations.

Keep in mind that perforations were added after gumming on genuine stamps, and remember that gum has to be liquefied to be added in regumming. The result is that in all but the most professional jobs, the perforation hole edges and tips will not be crisp and clean as normal. Under magnification, you can find evidence of discoloration from the application of the liquid gum after the holes were punched, or you can find gum only around the edge of the hole. Regummers also sometimes try to stop application of gum just short of the hole, and that can be obvious.

The tests described for these 10 situations will often result in conclusive results, ruling out the candidate as fully genuine. However, in those cases where the you are not certain or have suspicions, getting the stamp expertized is the way to go.

After all is said and done, you can determine that a stamp is not worth submitting, but only a good expertizing certificate proves that it was worth submitting! ■

No expertizing required: 10 modern-era examples

In the last 70 years of United States stamps, 1947 to the present, there are instances of what appear to be color or perforation errors that can easily be ruled out as such.

In the U.S. Stamp Notes column on expertizing in the Aug. 15 *Linn's*, I discussed 10 instances from the first hundred years of United States philately in which expertizing is not essential to a finding that the stamp in question is or is not a genuinely scarce item.

This time, I am presenting 10 items from the past 70 years.

In the 1950s, multicolor printing became more prevalent in the production of U.S. stamps. Prior to that, the use of two or more colors on a U.S. stamp was a rarity: Multicolor printing was expensive, time consuming, and reserved for special issuances only.

Curiously, the problem most often seen with early multicolor stamps is color misregistrations, with color inverts in second place.

It was not until the 1960s that a majority of U.S. stamps were produced in multicolor and that missing colors became a serious problem.

In the 1950s and 1960s, multicolor designs were printed on the Giori three-color plate press, and later multiprocess presses that included both offset and gravure printing stations came on line. These presses represented significant advances in printing, combining both speed and complexity. This opened a window for new inking problems.

Suddenly, there were instances where individual printing stations ran out of ink, corner folds put part of a sheet beyond the reach of an inked plate, and misperforating of finished sheets could leave a design image that cut off a color.

Missing-color errors that resulted do need certificates. But it is important to remember that the presence of any part of the missing color disqualifies the stamp from being called a true missing color. The catalog description most often used is "color omitted," and that means the entire color must be gone.

In other words, the presence of a single dot of color or shadow identifiable as the intended color disqualifies the stamp. If you have a 20x to 30x magnifier, look carefully at the area where the missing color is supposed to be. That is what an expertizer will do. If you see any vestige of a color, don't bother sending in the stamp; it will not get a good certificate.

As an example, a coil pair of 1978 15¢ Americana stamps (Scott 1618C) is shown nearby. The stamp was printed in gray, dark blue and red. While part of the gray is missing, a shadow of it can be seen on the left side of each stamp.

A second category is what many think

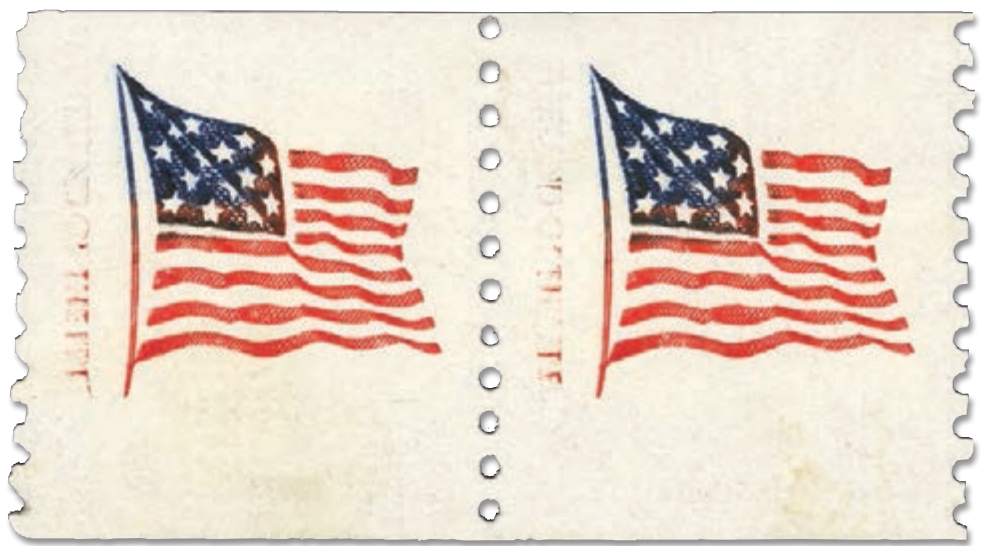
may be a missing color because there is a significant difference in colors between two stamps. In this case, there is no color missing, rather the stamps were printed using a process that relied on dots of five basic colors that are overlaid on top of one another to produce the colors needed for the design.

Our example is the 13¢ Washington at Princeton pair from the issue of 1977 (Scott 1704). On the left-hand stamp, the yellow of his uniform is bright, while on the right it looks like the yellow is missing.

This process relies upon the printed dots of color being of a certain size and intensity. If too light or too dark, the final product can be quite different from what was intended, and someone looking at the two stamps side-by-side can be forgiven for thinking that something is missing from one of the stamps. In the Washington at Princeton example, the red dots that give the yellow its brightness are weak on the stamp on the right.

Here again, because the naked eye will fool you, you need to look at the two stamps under high magnification, preferably 30x. This will tell you if there is a color missing, or if there is just a light print of one color that leaves a final color that differs from what

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Even a single dot of an otherwise missing color disqualifies a stamp as being a color-omitted error, as with this 1978 15¢ Americana coil pair that is missing most of the gray. A normal sheet stamp is pictured on the left for comparison.

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was intended. Don't bother sending in the latter; it may be a collectible variety, but not an error.

A third color category involves instances where one or more colors have been altered. This can happen on purpose; in other words, someone has used chemicals trying to create an error where one does not exist. Colors also can be altered by accident through exposure to chemicals in washing or intense light. Reds, yellows and oranges are most subject to being changed.

So even if you look carefully and all of a given color is missing, you also need to look at the white part of the stamp. If it appears flat or discolored compared to a genuine normal example, there is no point in sending the stamp in for expertization.

Another good idea is to check missing colors against a normal example using ultraviolet light. Often, the process of altering a color also will alter the tagging.

Let's now turn to perforations — or lack thereof — on the fourth example of when expertizing is not needed.

When you have what looks to be an imperforate single, keep in mind that it is rare that you can get a certificate on a single. The protocol for

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At left is an example of the 1977 13¢ Washington at Princeton stamp with a bright yellow uniform. The stamp at right was sent in for expertization as a possible missing color, but the dull yellow is caused by a misprint of weak red dots. There is no missing color.

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collecting imperf is that they must be in pairs.

The reason is that the placement of perforations is not always an exact science, especially when you are dealing with stamps produced in booklet form, with one or more straight edges. In the three examples shown, it is not hard to see how imperf singles can be created using a pair of scissors.

The fifth example is represented by the imperf pair of 1991 29¢ Desert Shield/Desert Storm stamps (Scott 2552) shown nearby. Even if you have such a pair, you might still not be home free. Always check your Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* and read any notes after the issue you have. In this case, the catalog states that horizontally imperforate vertical pairs are

from printer's waste.

Printers' waste does not have the same status as errors. Basically, it is unfinished material intended to be destroyed that has made its way out the back door of security printers. It will not be listed as respectable errors, nor will it command error prices.

A sixth non-error is often found on the 1968 6¢ Flag and White House stamp. Like color error candidates that are disqualified because of a single dot of color, imperf and imperf-between stamps are disqualified by the presence of even a single impression of a perforation hole. The 6¢ Flag is often seen with imperf margins, but virtually every example I have examined has the impression of the pins just inside the design. These impressions are visible only from the gum side of the stamp.

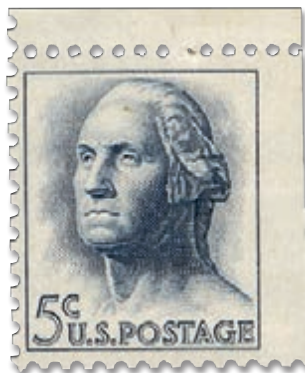
I am calling the seventh category "almost imperf." Although I once saw an auction lot described like that, there is no such thing as "almost imperf." It is or it isn't. If one perforation hole or hole impression is present, it will not get a good certificate.

Doubled perforations are the eighth problem area. There have been dispensing machines that have left hole-like impressions. In addition, simple perforating machines can be used to produce second sets of holes.

Before submitting double perfs for certification, compare the second set of perforation holes to the ones you know are genuine. They must match exactly in gauge and in size.



This pair of 29¢ Desert Shield/Desert Storm stamps is printer's waste, unfinished material that was stolen from the printer. It is not classifiable as an error and does not bring error prices. Usually such material is noted in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*.



These stamps from booklets give an idea of how credible imperforate singles can be made. It is for this reason that imperforate errors are generally collected as pairs.



On this 1993 29¢ stamp, Elvis appears to be doubled, and this can fool noncollectors. However, it is only a slight color misregistration, and even if expertized as such, it is not worth a small fortune. So save your money.

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Those same private perforators can be used to create modern rarities. The 15¢ John Paul Jones stamp (Scott 1789-1789B) exists in three perforation versions: perf 12 by 12, 12 by 11, and 11 by 11. The 12 by 12 is a modern rarity, cataloging mint at \$3,250. I have seen examples where the top and bottom gauge-11 perfs have been replaced by gauge-12 perfs.

The problem for the re-perforator trying to do this is that they must both match the genuine perf 12, and not shorten the stamp beyond what is credible. Both are difficult. So, before you buy or submit a John Paul

Jones 12 by 12 for certification, you can rule out most fakes by comparing the candidate against a known genuine perf 11 by 12 stamp.

The 10th example is one of my favorites. The 1993 29¢ Elvis Presley commemorative stamps were very popular and often purchased by people who were not collectors. Half a dozen times since then, I have been asked if the slight color misregistration they have is a valuable double print error. It isn't. A curiosity? Yes. Collectible? Yes. But not an error, and there is no need to have it expertized. ■

The BEP helped fill in production information gaps

In comparing two 25¢ Honeybee stamps, the author found the yellow background to be deeper and richer on one stamp. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing determined that this was a trend.

Expertizing tells us what a particular stamp or cover is or is not. But in many cases, there is a step beyond that finding, especially with regard to stamps: How was the stamp produced, and if there is a variation that has been noted, how did it happen?

Even if those explanations have no bearing on the stamp's value, they may be important to the student of stamp printing, and they are surely important to understanding why even a minor variety may be collectible.

The explanation is rarely simple and may take the efforts of a printing professional to uncover. Thus, expertizing does not routinely include such explanations. Providing them (for an additional fee) might be an interesting way to expand the expertizing services on which we rely, but be careful what you wish for, as there would be significant problems to overcome.

In my experience, an expertizer schooled in production processes can probably diagnose 75 percent of what they see, at least to the point of defining alternatives. In other words, "It could be this, or it could be that." But there is no help for the other 25 percent, except to ask the printer, "What happened?"

Two 1988 25¢ Honeybee coil stamps are shown with this column. I am hopeful that you will be able to see that the yellow background of the stamp on the left is deeper and richer than the background yellow of the stamp on the right.

Was a different color of ink used? If so, that would have implications for catalog listings, for album makers and for collectors.

As an expertizer, my response is "probably not." But despite being a student of stamp production, I couldn't substantiate that opinion with specifics. So, in 1989, when I noticed this difference in stamps I had in my collection, I sent the stamps in to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) for its thoughts.

Here, slightly abridged for considerations of space, is what the BEP had to say:

"In an attempt to determine if the color variation of the submitted stamps was an isolated occurrence, the Bureau collected a number of circulated stamps. After a thorough examination of both the submitted and



These two 1988 25¢ Honeybee coil stamps exhibit clearly different background yellows under the "25USA" inscription. At top is a darker, richer yellow than what is shown on the example on the bottom. The question is: Were these colors the result of different inks?

collected stamps, it was determined that the color difference of the Honeybee stamps is a general trend. It was also noticed that the other colors of this particular stamp exhibit color differences, but do not necessarily become deeper colors as the yellow color deepens.

"Some of the collected stamps were arranged into two sets for spectrophotometric analysis. The first set had a light yellow background, and the second had a deeper

yellow background. The stamps in both sets were selected on the basis of the density of the yellow background, and the freedom of cancellation ink in the measuring area ...

"Reflectance spectra obtained from the submitted and collated stamps from the arranged sets were compared. The spectra indicate that there are no significant differences in pigmentation. The difference, which is indicated by the spectra, is that stamps having the light yellow background have a higher reflectance value in the range of wavelengths used for the analysis.

"The Honeybee postage stamp was produced by a combination of offset lithographic and intaglio printing processes. All colors on this stamp were printed by the offset process except the lines of the Honeybee. These lines were printed by the intaglio process.

"In the offset process, various factors can affect the color intensity of ink on paper. These factors include the viscosity of the ink, pigmentation concentration, press settings, water balance in the offset press fountain solution, paper's surface micro-structure and surface chemistry. Since color intensity is related to the amount of ink deposition or thickness of an ink film, variations of any one or a combination of the factors mentioned may affect the color intensity of an ink printed using the offset process.

"The submitted stamps represent normal color variations which resulted during the printing of this issue, and are, therefore, within the limits of BEP quality standards."

The bottom line: The color variation is not the result of different inks, and while significant enough to be collectible, does not warrant catalog listing. I am really pleased to have the matter put to bed with no further debate needed.

Unfortunately, the United States Postal Service phased out the production of U.S. stamps at the BEP in the early years of this century, and all U.S. stamp production is now done by private contractors.

Part of the rules of the game nowadays is that the private contractors do not answer

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questions like this. Why? Well it would require extra effort if the contractors were to provide this service, and the cost of that effort would be passed along to the USPS in the form of a more expensive contract.

The Postal Service itself may be asked questions, but my experience is that it is not interested in providing explanations unless the question has wider implications than the effects on a single stamp issue.

So, I look back fondly on the good old days when the BEP actually took an interest

in questions as a means to understand new varieties and to understand how its quality control had failed.

Over the course of my involvement in U.S. philately, I asked the Bureau many questions. Its responses comprise a small archive of information that exists nowhere else. I've also been able to add to that archive, thanks to the contributions of others who also asked questions and received responses.

Altogether, I have more than 50 BEP responses and have begun a process that will lead to posting them on the website of the

Errors, Freaks and Oddities Collectors' Club, www.efocc.org. As part of that process, I am asking all U.S. collectors who have this type of correspondence — be it with BEP or the USPS — to let me have copies of it to include in the posted archive.

If you can contribute one or more of these explanatory letters, I would appreciate your sending me a clear photocopy of both the request for an opinion and the response. You can send them to me as attachments to an email at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or as hard copy to Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125. ■

A new Washington-Franklin error? Not likely.

The author answers a collector's question about a Washington-Franklin stamp with the wrong perforations and also explains added perforations on the Farley issues.

Over many years of talking with collectors and *Linn's* readers at shows and in stamp clubs, I've learned that very few actually get around to writing the letters, or emails, to me they would like to write. The result is that when a collector does send me a question or comment, he or she probably represents many others who may have the same question or concern. Because of this, I take reader correspondence seriously, and find that it often sparks new columns.

I recently received the following email related to United States stamps and expertizing: "I may have a 2¢ Washington (Scott 406) perf 12, with perf 11 on top, though I know none are known to exist."

A normal Scott 406 is shown nearby, together with an example that is poorly centered. This is the first of the "2 cents 2" designs, perforated gauge 12, issued in 1912. It is Type I, an important point if there were any other perf 12s for this design, but 406 is the only perf 12.

So, what does this collector have? There are four possibilities: 1. It is genuine. 2. It is a misperf that has been altered. 3. It is an imperf Scott 409 altered. 4. It is a straight edge altered.

As I have written in previous columns, a totally new error coming to light after 100-plus years is at best improbable. It is not impossible, but the odds are astronomical.



The first issuance of the "2 Cents 2" Washington design type in the Washington-Franklin series is the 1912 perforated gauge 12 (Scott 406), two of which are illustrated: one with nice centering, and one with the kind of centering often encountered on this issue.

That said, I have not inspected the stamp under discussion here.

Some collectors seem to think that it is possible to expertize based on photocopies or computer scans. While these images can be helpful, nothing can substitute for seeing the genuine (even if faked) item. And no expertizer worth the name will issue a genuine certificate, or recommend that one be issued, based on an image of an item.

As for the four possibilities I mentioned, the

bottom line for the first one, the idea that it is genuine, can be discounted to nearly zero.

The second possibility that it is a misperf that has been altered is based on the fact that almost half of the Scott 406 stamps that you will see are poorly centered, like the example shown nearby on the right.

With this stamp, it would not be difficult to remove the right side perforations and substitute those of another gauge. However, to pass muster, the faker would have to match the genuine gauge for the perforations added, and the shape of the perforations and size of the holes would also have to match genuine perfs. The likelihood of all of that detail being properly done is small.

The stamp also would have to be wider than normal because the altered stamp would have to be at least the size of a normal stamp to be credible. Narrow and short stamps are suspect.

The third possibility posits that perforations were added to an imperf stamp. Doing that eliminates the problem of credibility with thin or short stamps, but it multiplies the problem of gauge, size and form of the perforations. In practice, I don't see this as a real possibility as there would be too much work for not enough payoff.

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Looking closely at this plate block of the 3¢ stamp featuring the painting popularly known as *Whistler's Mother*, you will notice that it has horizontal perforations, but no vertical perfs. These perforations have been added to a Farley issue reprint. Image courtesy of Jacques C. Schiff Jr.



Sometimes perforations were added to the imperforate Farley stamps. Shown with a normal perf gauge 11 16¢ airmail special delivery stamp in the selvage is this block of perf 15 Farley stamps that were released imperforate.

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The fourth possibility relies on the fact that these stamps were printed in sheets of 400 (two panes wide by two panes tall). The sheets were cut into four 100-stamp panes using printed lines through imperf margins between the panes as guides. That slitting process often missed the line, so that the resulting stamps could have a tall or a short straight edge.

Using a stamp with a tall straight edge (from the top of a bottom pane) eliminates the short/thin problem as the faker need only pick a stamp that has been cut from an adjoining pane with a little extra imperf margin.

The original stamp unseen, this seems like the most likely explanation to me. The only way to be certain is to submit the stamp for expertization, and perhaps the owner will do that.

FARLEY IMPERFS PERFORATED

Speaking of added perforations, every so often I see perforated versions of the imperforate Farley issues of 1935 (Scott 752-771).

The Farleys are 20 stamps and souvenir sheets released to the public after Postmaster General James A. Farley was “caught” giving limited-edition, mostly imperforate, sheets of commemorative stamps to friends and high government officials.

They resulting outcry from collectors and politicians prompted Farley

to make these same stamps available to the public.

The stamps involved were the 10 National Parks Year stamps; the Peace of 1783, Byrd Antarctic, Mothers of America, and Wisconsin Tercentenary stamps; contemporary souvenir sheets; and the 16¢ blue airmail special delivery stamp.

All of these were imperforate, except the Peace of 1783 stamps, which are perforated gauge 10½ by 11, just like the normal.

Sometimes owners present perforated versions of these Farley stamps with a question as to what they are, disbelieving that they could be genuine. Others send them in for expertization hoping that they have found an error.

An example of these added perforations is shown nearby, courtesy of Jacques C. Schiff Jr. Horizontal perforations, but not vertical, have been added to these 3¢ Mothers of America commemoratives. The perforations are gauge 11.7, mimicking the genuine 11.2 perforations of the normal issue.



A single perf 15 airmail special delivery stamp helps to pay the rate on this 1944 cover from stamp dealer Y. Souren in New York City. On cover uses of privately perforated Farley issues are very scarce.

The vast majority of Farleys have remained imperf as issued. But from the time of issue until today, some collectors and dealers have felt the need to add perforations — either to facilitate use, or to create what they thought might be salable varieties.

How to tell when perforations have been added? As with the illustrated Mothers of America block, the Farley reprints were released without gum, and the perforations added seldom match the genuine perforations of the era exactly.

For the souvenir sheets, which were never issued with perforations, the presence of perfs is enough to identify them as Farleys.

More often than not the added perforations are the wrong gauge. Another example is the airmail special delivery stamp, perforated gauge 15. If perforated versions are unusual, they are extremely difficult to find on cover. One such example is pictured nearby, courtesy of Hideo Yokota. It proves the origin of the block of the airmail special delivery stamps, because the 1944 cover is from New York City stamp dealer Y. Souren.

Three such covers are known, all from Souren to customers. It would appear that he added the perforations, and gum, too, to make the stamps more user friendly.

Should you have a question or comment, you can write to me, John Hotchner, Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125, or by email at jmhstamp@verizon.net. ■

Something extra: Huck joint lines and tagging ghosts

If joint lines exist on stamps printed by Huck presses, why are they not listed in the Scott catalog? John Hotchner answers this often-asked question and explains what “ghost impressions” are.

There are two types of varieties that are more than 45 years old that cause confusion among collectors who like to catch printing flaws: joint lines where they are not expected and plate numbers or design elements with a ghost impression.

Collectors often ask about these items and sometimes even submit them for expertizing, wondering or hoping that they might be rare errors. I am using this month's column to set the record straight.



These United States coil stamps produced on a Huck press show unplanned joint lines. The lines vary in intensity and color. Strips without joint lines also can be found.

For an example of joint lines where they are not expected, look at the plate strip of 10 1969 6¢ Winter Sunday in Norway, Maine, Christmas stamps (Scott 1384) shown nearby. Notice that there are vertical green and red lines between columns one and two and three and four.

If a collector had found such a strip and wanted an expert's opinion, the finder would write something like, “These must be rare since I can't find joint lines for this issue listed in the Scott catalog.”

This is not an irrational conclusion, and the phenomenon is seen even more often on contemporary coils that — like the 1969 Christmas stamps — were produced on the Bureau of Engraving and Printing's Huck press. Some of those coils are shown nearby.

Coils from 1908 onward existed either in the form of Scott-listed guideline pairs or joint-line pairs, that is until the Huck press was used to produce United States stamps beginning in 1969. As new stamp catalogs were published, collectors noted that joint-line pairs were not listed for Huck press products, even though they clearly exist.

Why not? The answer lies in the fact that they are not consistent, as are the line pairs from other presses. Huck press line pairs range from being hardly visible to being quite heavy. They also are seen in various inconsistent combinations of the colors used to print the stamps.

In fact, Huck line pairs were not planned, as
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The Huck press plate for the 1969 6¢ Winter Sunday in Norway, Maine, Christmas stamps was only two stamps wide. Inks used to print the stamps could be deposited in the joints between the plates, leaving irregular lines between the stamps as seen here.



Pre- and post-Huck press coil production resulted in joint lines between stamps where the plates met. Because the plates were often 26 subjects long, joint lines were present at expected locations, although they might vary a bit in intensity.



Doubled, or "ghosted," plate numbers, as seen on this 1971 8¢ San Juan plate block, are collectible varieties, but with more interest than cash value.

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were the joint-line pairs from other presses. Line pairs from the pre- and post-Huck eras were the result of coils being produced on rotary presses that had two semicircular



Ghosted images in a design are unusual as compared to ghosted plate numbers. On this 1973 Rural America block, those words are doubled downward, but they are not double prints.

plates wrapped around the printing cylinder. The plates did not fit perfectly where they met. The depression between the plates filled with ink and printed a line on the roll of printing paper with predictable regularity, usually every 26 stamps.

Because the lines were between two stamps and they were expected to be there, joint-line pairs became a collectible variety and are listed by Scott.

The joint lines also were a feature of sheet stamps, but in that case, the lines were printed in the margins, away from the stamps, so they were not considered to be collectible nor were they given listings in the catalog.

The Huck press was quite different. Instead of semicircular plates, it used curved plates that were the width of four definitive-size stamps, or in the case of the 1968 and 1969 Christmas stamps, the width of two commemorative-size stamps.

Sometimes those plates fit so well together that there was no printed line where they met. At other times where there was a small gap between the plates, the ink entered those gaps when the plate was inked, and a line showed up between printed stamps, no matter whether they were coil stamps or sheet stamps.

Because the lines were not intended and were so variable when they did occur, the Scott editors decided not to list them. But just because a listing does not appear in the

Scott catalog does not mean that the items are scarce or expensive. In fact, most Huck joint-line varieties are neither, but they are interesting and collectible.

Another confusing aspect of Huck printing applies only to sheet stamps: Why are there no side margins on issued sheets, only the top and bottom margins?

The Huck press plates produced a continuous roll of stamps called a web with plate numbers and other marginal markings at either edge of the web, but the stamp images were continuous on the web — both across the web and in the direction of travel through the press. In other words, there were none of the interior margins we are used to seeing with stamps printed by non-Huck presses.

What that means is once the web was sectioned into post office panes of 100 definitives or 50 Christmas stamps, there was no margin on three sides.

A slight miscut might show a piece of the adjoining pane, and rarely an 11th definitive stamp. With a pre- or post-Huck stamp, such a miscut would only result in a margin that might be a little larger or smaller than normal, and no one would pay any attention.

DOUBLED PLATE NUMBERS

A second often-seen confusing effect is called a "ghost impression." The name comes

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from the light second impressions that may be left after the tagging process.

It is most often seen in plate numbers, but can also be found in design elements. A good example of the doubled plate number effect can be seen on the 1971 8¢ 450th anniversary of San Juan, Puerto Rico, commemorative (Scott 1437).

The directly printed plate number is 33201. Slightly displaced to the lower left is the ghost plate number 33202. Both numbers (and others, too) were used in the printing of this issue.

Where did the ghosted 33202 on the plate block come from? Most of the picture on the stamp was printed by offset lithography. After that, some of the highlighting in the design (in red brown and dark brown) and the lettering including the plate number (in black) were added by engraving. Once that was done, the printed sheets were put through another station to add the taggant.

Now, picture the wet sheets coming out of the intaglio printing station, and going through a roller that applies the tagging material.

Intaglio ink is notoriously thick and slow to dry. A station equivalent to a small oven tries to speed that process along before the tagging operation. But if the ink has not completely dried, and most often this seems to happen to the outside of the sheet, the tagging roller can pick up some part of the design and/or the marginal markings as the sheet goes through.

That wet ink does not stay on the tagging roller. Rather, it will then offset onto the next sheet to make contact with the roller surface.

If the alignment is perfect or close, there will be little to no effect on the design part of the stamp. But if the alignment is off even a little bit and the plate number of a preceding sheet is different from a succeeding one, the plate number of the preceding sheet will show up as a ghost impression on the succeeding sheet.

A nice example of ghosting can be seen in the design of the 1973 8¢ Rural America Angus and Longhorn Cattle stamp. Here it is the blue "Rural America" that is affected, and it is doubled downward.

I have seen such ghosted items submitted for expertizing as double printings, which means that the design was somehow printed twice on press. As I have already explained, they are no such thing.

These ghosts have been found on virtually all tagged issues that include intaglio elements from the introduction of tagging with the 5¢ first-class-rate era until the Bureau of Engraving and Printing seems to have found a way to eliminate the problem sometime in the 1980s.

They are neither rare nor valuable. In fact, they are common enough to be found in your favorite dealer's plate-block stock, often at the same price as the normal block, or at a dollar or two more. It is also possible to find a third ghosted number, though that occurs less often.

What does have significant additional value is a tagging ghost where a large part of the design also is doubled, but it is still classed as a variety, not an error.

These varieties make an interesting addition to your album, but get no catalog listing and have only minimal additional value. ■

Getting an expertizing certificate: Why bother?

If the cost of an expertization certificate doesn't make sense because a stamp or error has a low catalog value, one option available is to become your own expert.

Several correspondents have asked: "Is it cost effective to get a certificate of genuineness when a stamp has a catalog value under \$100 and the sale value might be half of that, or less? And what if you have an uncataloged variety that is relatively minor but important to your study of a given issue?"

In other words, if an expertizing certificate costs \$25 or more, why would anyone bother to pay a fee that will likely cost a good chunk of the possible realization?

Another way to look at this is the question, "What is the value of a certificate?"

Of course, it is difficult to generalize. Every stamp is different in some respect from every other stamp. So, one that is of very high quality might well sell for more than catalog value, and having its bona fides attested to by a recent certificate encourages buyers or bidders to see the item as worth their consideration. Still, spending money to get an inexpensive stamp certified is risky in the sense that high bids are not guaranteed.

But let's leave the subject of money for a moment. Many requests for certificates are based on the fact that collectors want to protect themselves by being certain that the money they are spending is for a genuine, unaltered stamp. They have simply made a decision that only certified stamps will be acceptable for their collection, especially when such stamps have been known to be extensively doctored or counterfeited.

Take for instance the 1929 Kansas-Nebraska overprints. I see examples of the stamps denominated 3¢ and up come through for expertizing regularly, despite the fact that the only examples that catalog more than \$100 are mint never-hinged 8¢ Kansas and 10¢ Nebraska stamps. Most of the rest don't approach those figures.

However, the overprints are often suspect and, for peace of mind, getting these stamps certified provides a level of clarity that many find attractive. Three genuine stamps are shown in the top row of the nearby illustration; below them are three counterfeit overprints.

Some collectors may also feel that at some



Kansas-Nebraska overprints can be tricky. The three examples of these overprinted stamps in the top row are genuine. Those in the bottom row are easily spotted fakes.



The 1969 6¢ Christmas stamp is known with the light green at the end of the road (just below the sky) omitted. At left is a normal example. At right is one with the light green completely omitted. Examples of this stamp with partial missing light green also are known.

distant time when the stamps are to be sold, they will be more readily salable and perhaps the prices will have risen by then.

Many similar situations exist. Stamps with colors omitted are virtually unsalable to knowledgeable collectors — except "as is" and significantly discounted — without a certificate.

The higher the catalog value, the more important the certificate will be to a

prospective buyer, and a seller who ignores that need is headed for disappointing results, or a long wait for proceeds while the buyer puts the item "on extension," meaning that the sale is not final until the stamp has been submitted for a certificate and a good certificate is forthcoming.

But what to do, for example, about the 1969 6¢ Winter Sunday in Norway, Maine, Christmas

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stamp with light green omitted (Scott 1384c). It catalogs \$25 in mint condition. Thus, the cost of a certificate will not likely be recouped in selling the stamp, but without a certificate can a buyer be absolutely certain that every last speck of the light green is omitted?

A parallel item would be the 1938 1½¢ Martha Washington Presidential horizontal pair, imperforate between (Scott 805b), which catalogs \$100 mint and \$20 used.

There are two problems with this error. First is that an imperf-between pair must be totally imperf without a hint of even a single perf pin to be seen. There is no such thing as “almost imperf,” a description I have seen from time to time in auction catalogs. It is imperf, or it isn’t. End of discussion.

Unfortunately, the great majority of the pairs with perforations missing between do not qualify, and those that do are almost always lovely mint examples precanceled St.

Louis, Mo. As the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* points out with the listing, “Precancelled examples are considered used, and are valued in the used column.”

The block of six shown with this column has one perf hole in the top pair, three in the bottom pair, and the middle pair is imperf between. There are also perforations missing in the margin of the bottom two pairs, but some pin impressions.

So, despite pristine gum, these imperf between pairs are valued at only \$20, and spending money on a certificate would seem to be ill-advised from a financial point of view.

So, what is a collector who wants to be certain of genuineness of such material to do? I can advise only three alternatives: Write the check for the certificate; take the risk, given that the cost is relatively minor; or become your own expert.

As I have mentioned before in this column, the last choice is not so difficult. For omitted colors and imperfs, three things are required: a 30x magnifier, good light, and an attitude of caution with an impartial mind-set.

For Kansas-Nebraska overprints, you also need good reference material to know the characteristics of the stamps that were overprinted, and what the known counterfeits of the overprint look like.

In both cases, the attitude of caution is key. You cannot be too willing to see what you wish to see. The mark of a good expertizer is the ability to see what is there, not what one wishes were there.

So, returning to the question in the first paragraph, my answer is that most often it is not financially sound to opt for the certificate, but the value of the certificate might well go beyond its cash value. If it represents certainty, that is a legitimate consideration.

The result is that of the three alternatives, there is no single right answer. Each of us as collectors has to decide how to deal with this question.

For what it is worth, my recommendation is to learn to become your own expert, especially for material that has a simple yes-no answer. It will deepen your appreciation of your hobby and your material, and can save you a bundle of bucks.

GREAT RESOURCE

Theodore Tedesco has done all of us a favor



These fully gummed, precanceled 1½¢ Martha Washington stamps demonstrate the problems of identifying genuine imperf-between pairs. The top and bottom pairs have perf holes in evidence. The middle pair is the error, but because of the precancel and despite the gum, these are considered to be used stamps, valued at \$20 for the pair, not the \$100 for a mint version of the error.

by compiling a 1,200-page *Index of Literature in the English Language that Describes Postal Stamp Forgeries, Fakes, Reprints, Fraudulent Postal Markings and Other Obliterations*. Dated May 2014, the first edition of the index is organized by country and can be used to determine where fakes are known, and where the collector can go to access detailed information about them.

The index can be downloaded at <http://stamps.org/userfiles/file/library/TedescoIndex.pdf>. It is free.

Most if not all of the references that Tedesco provides would be on record at the American Philatelic Research Library, and access to the APRL is an excellent reason to be an American Philatelic Society member if you have not already joined. Go to www.stamps.org for information about the society and how to join. ■

Resubmissions with new information welcomed

If you are submitting a stamp or cover for expertization, consider adding a letter that provides an explanation, and any available evidence, of why the item is believed to be genuine.

I've made passing references in earlier U.S. Stamp Notes columns to resubmitting items for expertization that have come back with no, or negative, opinions, but a recent article by Kevin Lowther prompted me to dig a little deeper.

Lowther's article, "New Technologies Invite Collectors to Resubmit Items for Certification," was published in the January issue of the *United States Specialist*, the monthly journal of the United States Stamp Society.

The article discusses the case of a 1909 13¢ Washington stamp from the Washington-Franklin series that had been submitted for expertization in 2000. It was believed to be an example printed on blue paper, Scott 365.

However, the certificate came back with the opinion that the stamp was Scott 339, the double-line watermarked normal issue, printed on paper that had been toned. A normal Scott 339 is shown nearby.

The stamp was filed away for a time, but eventually Lowther sent it to Harry Brittain. Lowther described Brittain as a "USSS member with the necessary equipment and expertise, to contrast the stamp's paper with that used to print two certified blue paper stamps in my collection."



This 13¢ Washington from the first series (1908-09) of the Washington-Franklin definitives also exists printed on experimental blue paper. Expertizing can require specialized equipment.



This 10¢ 1898 Trans-Mississippi commemorative stamp appears to have a tear in the lower-left corner. In fact, as seen from the back, the entire corner has been added.

Brittain made a convincing case that the papers of all three stamps were the same. With this information in hand, the stamp was resubmitted for expertizing in 2016, and received a positive certificate as a Scott 365.

Lowther wrote: "There is a lesson here. The technology used by Brittain was unavailable in 2000. Expertizing services now have more advanced means to examine items that may previously have defied ready identification or were misidentified."

He ended with a suggestion from the director of an expertizing service that because of the improved technologies available, collectors who have items that were certified more than 15 years ago consider submitting them for recertification.

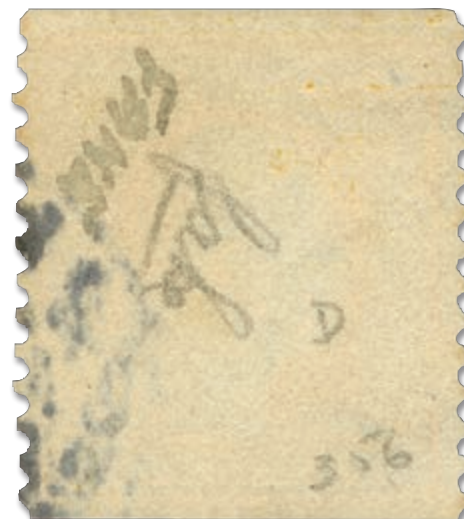
New technology is not the only reason for resubmission. Not too long ago, I sent in for certification a People's Republic of China booklet that was made from stamps taken from a normal sheet. The certificate came back as a "no opinion" because the experts could not agree.

Ultimately, I was able to resubmit with evidence that the booklet and several others like it had been purchased as new issues. That turned the tide, and a good certificate was issued.

Often submitters have good reason to believe that an item is genuine but make the mistake (as I did with the China booklet) of assuming that their reasons will be obvious to expertizers.

It takes a bit of extra effort, but submitters

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Is this a genuine 10¢ coil? If it is, the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* values it at \$4,500. The penciled notation on the reverse provides a clue.

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who are well acquainted with their items, should consider adding a letter with the expertizing form, setting forward the case for why the item is believed to be genuine.

This will help the expertizers focus on the most important characteristics of the item, and perhaps to overcome doubts as well. It does not guarantee a positive result, but it will blunt the likelihood of a premature turn-down.

If you receive a negative certificate and believe it is wrong, you have three alternatives:

1. File the item away pending acquisition of more knowledge, or better technology.

2. Resubmit with information you have that would mitigate negative opinions.

3. Submit to a different expertizing house. If you pursue the third choice, remember you will be asked on the submission form to state whether the item has been submitted for expertizing before, where, and what was the result.

You might wrongly assume that the previous negative opinion will damn the item to further negative opinions, but a competent expertizer will not start from that mindset.

We have all seen it happen: New eyes, with different experience and perhaps

more knowledge, might reach a different conclusion.

If you collect U.S. stamps, consider joining the United States Stamp Society. The monthly magazine alone is worth the annual dues of \$25. The society offers much more in the way of discounts on publications, study groups, access to experts who can help you, and the opportunity to advertise for your wants.

Additional information about membership can be obtained from the USSS Executive Secretary, Box 6634, Katy, TX 77491-6634, or from the USSS website, www.usstamps.org.

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This 15¢ Daniel Webster stamp could not have better centering, in fact it is so good that it should raise red flags. Turning over the stamp and seeing another stamp (right) raises even more.



genuine; instead, the fabricator simply pasted the 15¢ Daniel Webster design onto the back of a Washington 2¢ red brown (Scott 210), which is obvious when the stamp is turned over.

This would never pass in expertizing, but if the goal were to make an album page more impressive, it was a workable solution.

Patient 4: Another way to address the cut-down stamp has been to add perforations to the edges, and hope for the best. Shown is an example of a 2¢ Black Jack from 1863. I hope this would not fool anybody, but someone obviously hoped it would. We'll look at some more laughers in future columns. ■

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GOOD FOR LAUGHS

Repairs to high-catalog-value stamps can present some of the most subtle of problems to identify when expertizing. But sometimes the repairs are so blatant and obvious that a good laugh is the best reaction. Here are a few from my files that fall in the latter category.

Patient 1: The 1898 Trans-Mississippi 10¢ mint stamp looks pretty good from the front, except for what seems to be a tear in the lower left, as shown nearby. But turn it over and look at that corner, now at lower right. I

hope you can see that an entire new corner has been added. Besides that, the gum has been sweated over a clear hinge remnant.

Patient 2: If one or more rows of perforations are damaged on your sheet stamp and the stamp has a coil version, why not just cut off the offending perforations and make it into the coil?

Take a look at the "coil" illustrated here. The basic stamp is Scott 338, the double-line watermarked 10¢ Washington sheet stamp, with a catalog value of \$2 used. In its new form, it purports to be Scott 356, the 1909 coil, which catalogs at \$4,500.

Unfortunately, to the practiced eye of an expertizer, it is not tall enough to pass muster, and the clipped edges that would make it a coil are not parallel. Also, the person peddling this item partially erased — but not completely — a penciled notation on the back reading "fake."

Patient 3: In the olden days, some collectors cared nothing for perforations. They were an annoyance, so they could be cut away to the edge of the design. When such album weeds are encountered today, they have little value, even though the design might be complete. What some collectors have done is paste the design onto a new back.

Artfully executed, it can be a thing of beauty, as shown nearby, but the items usually will be too thick to pass as genuine. What makes this one laughable is that the person dealing with this fixer-upper didn't bother making new perforations to mimic the



Talk about close perforations. These are into the design of this 1863 2¢ Jackson stamp.

TRADING POSTHORN 1000

RECEIVE \$30 2015SCV (50¢ and up) for your 2000 off paper US or foreign stamps. Charles Roth, 11952 Calcite Ave., Hesperia CA 92345.

Possible problems lurking in your collection

Just because a stamp or cover has been in your collection for awhile does not mean that it should not be submitted for expertization. In fact, there are many reasons why it should be.

In commenting on previous columns in this ongoing series on expertizing, a couple of *Linn's* readers have suggested that it is not only current purchases of classic material that need to be expertized: You might have stamps and covers purchased much earlier in your philatelic career that should be authenticated.

This rings a bell with me because I have some items in this category, and I'll bet many other collectors do as well.

Why bother with expertizing? Here are three reasons.

1. It is always good to verify that the stamp you bought as a certain Scott number actually is just that.

2. Much as we might like to avoid the issue, we all eventually either disperse our collection, or leave it to family to disperse. In either case, having certificates on the items that are most likely to bring significant returns facilitates the process.

3. While expertizing might not be cheap now, the cost will only increase into the future.

With regard to the second and third reasons, allow me to share a story.

Not long ago, I was contacted by the family of a friend who had passed away 10 years earlier.

His collection of United States color-omitted stamps had resided in a safe-deposit box all that time. The family agreed that now was the time to break up the collection and sell off the material. Would I help? they asked.

Of course, I was happy to do that. The collector was a discriminating buyer, and he had amassed a very nice collection. However, not a single one of his acquisitions had come with a certificate, and he was expert enough to make his own judgments.

The problem is that he was a quiet collector. You could not say that a given error had come from his collection and have its bona fides immediately accepted. So, in order to obtain the best prices for the items in his collection, I first had to get certificates for them.

An example for Scott 1610a, the \$1



Certificates enhance the value of collections. This American Philatelic Society Expertizing Service (APEX) certificate states that the \$1 Candleholder submitted (and pictured) is "brown (engr.) omitted, unused, full original gum, never hinged, genuine in all respects."

Americana Candleholder with engraved brown omitted, is shown.

Not having certificates delayed the process of placing the material with an auction firm by three to six months, and cut into the family's realization by the up-front cost of a couple of thousand dollars.

Had he gotten certificates at the time he purchased the stamps, he would have paid much less for expertizing, and the error stamps would have been immediately salable.

Why, you might ask, not just sell stamps or covers "as is" and let the buyer worry about getting certificates? That is certainly an option, and you or your estate are only responsible for the cost if the certificates come back bad. But you will still wait to get your money because the auction

firm will not pay out until all questions of genuineness have been settled.

There are two other things to consider, too. First, while some buyers will bid on an item that does not have a certificate, others will not. This limits the competition.

Second, some buyers — most, I would say — will bid higher on lots that they know to be good based on a certificate. In this way, your cost to obtain the certificate tends to be repaid by the successful buyer.

While we are talking here about color-omitted errors, there are other U.S. stamps that are equally problematic without certificates. These include early high-value coils, high-value 19th-century U.S. stamps on cover, early U.S. mint stamps, rotary coil waste released in sheet form, U.S. possessions overprints, and any U.S. stamp where the used catalog value is higher than the mint catalog value.

In many of these instances, the stamp might be genuine, but it might also be altered or repaired to improve its appearance. Here again, the acquisition of a certificate now saying that the stamp (or cover) is accurately described with no faults makes it much more readily salable when the time comes.

Actually, I have misspoken. Certificates don't usually say "with no faults," rather, they will list faults if any are present; the absence of any faults noted is what a buyer is looking for.

There is another circumstance in which a certificate is needed for a stamp or cover you already own. If you are an exhibitor, as I am, you will find that when doing the creative work of nursing a new concept into a showable exhibit, you may well take stamps out of your album to use in your exhibit.

When you do this, you will want to be absolutely certain that what you are showing is the genuine article.

It is frowned upon, and properly so, to show a misdescribed or altered stamp or cover. It reflects badly on your philatelic knowledge.

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Of the six United States possessions overprints shown here, only the first 4¢ Lincoln stamp with a Philippines overprint is genuine. The other overprints are fakes.

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For me, getting a certificate on anything I know might be questioned in an exhibit is essential.

POSSESSIONS OVERPRINTS

I mentioned U.S. possessions overprints earlier in this column. These are stamps of the United States from the late 1890s to early years of the 1902-03 series that were overprinted for use in Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.

There are many other overprints in the possessions realm, both on later U.S. stamps and on stamps produced with the name of

the possession included as part of the basic design.

It is the earlier overprints that I want to focus on here. There are dangerous fakes, and there are some so amateurish that one wonders why the perpetrator bothered.

In the nearby illustration, the first 4¢ Lincoln stamp has a genuine Philippines overprint. It is followed by two almost credible fakes. Note that these overprints are in a slightly different typeface and are smaller.

Also pictured are an 8¢ Martha Washington with a really bad Philippines overprint, and two 2¢ Washingtons with poor Cuba and Puerto Rico ("Porto Rico") overprints. None of these fakes would fool a specialist.

The fact that they are on low-value stamps indicates that the intended market was not specialists, but rather the album collector who was intent on filling spaces.

The price difference between the basic used stamp and the overprinted version made the effort worthwhile.

The point here is that on stamps with higher catalog values more care would have been taken — at least in some cases — so a certificate is needed to be certain of authenticity. ■

Pre-expertizing? An idea whose time has not come

Because no collector or dealer can know everything about everything in the stamp hobby, there is always something new to learn, even for the experts. This keeps the hobby fresh and exciting.

Two readers of this column independently came up with a similar suggestion. Combining their observations, they say: "I have 400-odd specimens for which I would like certificates (and/or numerical grades), but that would cost several thousand dollars. So, as a practical matter I have the dilemma of choosing which material to get expertized. Is there a pre-expertizing service available?"

They continue by describing how such a service would operate, suggesting that it could be an individual or a commercial service that would, for about \$5 per item or a lot price for a larger quantity, render a nonbinding opinion, selecting those items most likely to get a good certificate.

They add that the owner would have to sign a statement agreeing that this is only an opinion and not a guarantee of a favorable finding.

I have no doubt that there are people who would be willing to do this — and some who actually do — but not as an established for-profit service.

I also am certain that individual collectors who are competent in their specific areas will do this as a favor for friends or stamp club buddies, though not in quantities of 400.

But the answer to the question "Is there such a service?" is no, not to my knowledge.

There are some practical problems that probably account for why such pre-

expertizing is done informally and not as a commercial service.

The rules change when something done as a free opinion becomes a for-profit enterprise. Such an entity would have presumed legal accountability for its opinions. Does signing a statement negate that? I'm thinking the legal fees to sort all this out could rapidly overwhelm any possible profits.

And what would happen when an unhappy submitter then spends the money to get a certificate, and it comes back "not genuine?" Or maybe even worse, the submitter eventually finds out that something he did not submit for a certificate is actually genuine, but the pre-expertizing service missed it?

The submitters are not going to be happy, and regardless of the signed statement, the telling and retelling of the story is going to have an effect on the reputation and quantity of work the service would receive.

Then there is the ethical dilemma those working in a pre-expertizing service would have if they are also experts who work with the established expertizing houses. Is it proper to be paid for, in fact, generating work for your expertizing service, or for reducing

the workload of your service?

There also is the likelihood that some submitters would choose to rely upon the pre-expertizing service as if it were a real expertizing service.

I can hear it now, "Well, so and so [a well-known person in the hobby] thinks it is genuine, so I'm going to offer it as such." However, the opinion is not backed by a reputable expertizing house, and there is no certificate. How does that translate into dollars for the seller and the buyer? This quickly becomes a quagmire.

There also are the staffing and competence angles to be considered. There is no expert who knows everything about everything, and assembling the stable of experts to populate such a service would be daunting.

Experts who work for recognized expertizing houses receive negligible compensation; a pre-expertizing service would have to pay even less. Could it even attract the most competent experts?

And suppose an expert receives an item, and spends half an hour looking at it and researching it in literature, and still can't in

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Any type of green cancellation in the early years of United States stamps is a nice find. This olive green example got the author of this column's heart beating a bit faster when he found it, but it turned out to be something quite different than what he expected.

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good conscience reach a conclusion. Does the fee get returned?

Taken together, these issues constitute a powerful set of reasons why such a pre-expertizing service has not been established.

A LESSON IN HUMILITY

As I have already mentioned in this column no expert, collector, or dealer knows everything about everything. Even though I have been involved in the stamp hobby since the age of five, I am regularly reminded of what I don't know. The current case relates to an 1857 3¢ cover (Scott 26).

Always on the lookout for odd philatelic items, I bought the cover because of the olive green cancel. Any green cancel in that era is a nice find and the price was right, so even though I did not have a Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* handy, I made the purchase. The dealer knew what he had because he wrote "green cancel" on the cover holder.

When I got the cover home, I looked it up in the Scott U.S. *Specialized* catalog and was surprised to find that there is no listing for an olive green cancel on Scott 26. I consulted my friend William T. Crowe, who is an expert in early United States and one of the few people in this country who does expertizing and issues his own certificates.

Crowe's response taught me something new: "It is a genuine stamp, tied by an oily black cancellation, that has degraded with the passage of time giving the appearance of an olive green cancellation, on a cover addressed to Sag Harbor, L.I. (New York)."

So, regardless of what it looks like, it does not qualify for a Scott listing. Instead it goes into my "odd stuff" collection. I had no idea that black ink could degrade in this fashion.

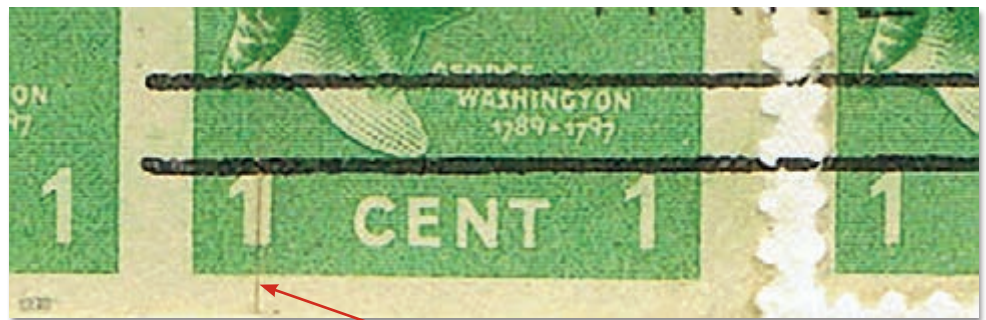
My second example of something that is not what it appears to be is a 3¢-rate cover franked with three 1¢ George Washington stamps from the Prexie (Presidential) definitive series of 1938. The cover was sent from New York City to Washington, D.C., in 1940.

The two stamps at left on the cover look like an imperforate-between pair with no perforations at the bottom.

Indeed, such an error is listed the Scott U.S. *Specialized* catalog as No. 804c: "Horiz. Pair, imperf between (from booklet pane)."



Is this a genuine 2¢ Prexie imperforate-between horizontal pair of 1¢ George Washington stamps from a booklet pane, as listed in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*? An owner could be forgiven for hoping it would qualify.



This blow-up of the lower left "1" of the middle stamp on the Prexie cover shows where two stamps from a miscut booklet pane were joined to make the pair appear to be an error.

But on close examination, what we have here is two stamps from the bottom of a miscut booklet pane of six. The two stamps on the cover were stamps 5 and 6 from the booklet pane, but they have been pasted on the cover in reverse order (6 and then 5), leaving perforations at left and right and the imperf margin of the miscut pane in the center.

The preparer of the cover might have done this on purpose or by accident, but left a hint by using a wide cut, right-hand stamp from the miscut pane (either stamp 2 or 4 from the same pane) on the cover. We can see how the two left-hand stamps were put together with a margin between that appears to be imperforate.

However, if you look carefully at the "1" in the lower left of the second stamp in the

pair, you can see where the two stamps were joined.

I found this cover in an accumulation, and it cost me less than \$1. It was not represented as an error, but you can see how it might easily be. The actual error is so scarce that Scott places a dash in the used column to indicate that there is insufficient information to serve as basis for assigning a value.

My bet is that the example that served as the basis for the Scott listing is unique.

The point I am trying to make with these two examples is that it is too easy to see what we want to see when looking at what might be a desirable item.

Expertizing provides the needed disinterested knowledge and perspective to properly identify questionable items. ■

The controversy behind a 6¢ Eagle airmail variety

Is the ultramarine version of Scott C23, the 1938 6¢ Eagle airmail stamp real? The controversy centers on whether it is a differentiable color, or merely a shade of the normal dark blue.

I might have been too hasty in suggesting in my expertizing column in the Feb. 15, 2016, *Linn's* that Scott C23c, the 1938 6¢ Eagle airmail with an ultramarine frame, be deleted from the Scott catalog. And maybe not.

The normal version of C23 is listed in Scott as having a frame that is "dark blue." There has been controversy about the "ultramarine" frame version since it was discovered. The controversy centers on whether the variety is a differentiable color resulting from a different ink, or merely a shade.

In the earlier column, I noted that it was hard to pontificate on the subject because I didn't own and hadn't examined any examples of Scott C23c.

However, I now own an expertized block. You can compare the blue of this block to the blue of the block on the first-day cover, both of which are illustrated here.

Thanks to *Linn's* reader Robert Rufe, I also have a number of clippings from 1945, when the discovery of this variety was made.

The most interesting is an Aug. 18, 1945, ad from *Stamps* magazine. It reads, in part: "Ten sheets of this stamp in ULTRAMARINE and carmine were discovered in Texas. The character and color of these stamps is such that they should have been removed by the Bureau [of Engraving and Printing] during examination and not permitted to get into circulation.

"This is not a mere shade difference but is a true error of color. ... [W]e are informed that these new stamps will be listed in the 1946 catalogue."

The ad was placed by dealer Emil Bruechig of New York City, and in it he notes that each stamp he sells will have his guarantee mark on the back. My block is signed in that fashion, and also has the signature of I. Heiman in the bottom margin on the reverse.

Bruechig's ad prices a mint single at \$100, and prices each position block also. In the case of my bottom-margin arrow block, his asking price for the entire bottom two rows (10



The author of this column recently acquired a bottom margin block of four of Scott C23c, the 1938 6¢ airmail stamp that the Scott U.S. Specialized catalog describes as "ultramarine and carmine." Compare the block to the normal blue color on a first-day cover with a block of four.

stamps) was \$1,200. The 2017 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* lists a mint single at \$160, but does not list the bottom block. It does list a mint center-line block at \$1,200, and a plate block at \$1,500. The latter two values are listed in italics.

What is stunning is the values that Scott assigns to a used example: \$1,500 for a used single (with an identifiable contemporary cancel), and \$1,750 on cover with a contemporaneous cancel (again both values are in italics). This is because the great

majority of the stamps were sold as mint collectibles, and very few were used for postage.

That these stamps are different from the normal blue colors associated with the issue, there can be no doubt. But I would offer two observations. First, the purported error is not very different from the used color misregistration shown, which has been in my collection for decades.

Second, the color of the error is decidedly not ultramarine.

For ultramarine, think of the later printings of the 30¢ Theodore Roosevelt Presidential stamp (Scott 830), which Scott lists as "deep ultramarine."

For the expertizer, this presents something of a nightmare. It is not unusual to find used and even mint examples of Scott C23 that match up favorably with the signed block shown here, but they are not signed.

That does not mean they are not real, because at least one other major discovery was made. Furthermore, it is likely others were simply purchased and used with no thought given to the color anomaly.

Another thought to add to this mix: I can't dismiss the possibility there is some way to chemically darken the normal color of that airmail stamp.

In a May 16, 1992, article in the late, lamented *Stamp Collector* newspaper, the venerable Herman "Pat" Herst delivered his opinion on the subject. His bottom line is summarized in this excerpt: "It is in the catalog today as a listed variety, priced at \$150. This is a big price for what in my unaltered opinion is an unimportant shade variety."

Herst based his opinion on a letter from George R.M. Ewing, a collector whom he characterized as one of the foremost collectors of 20th-century United States stamps.

Here is the relevant passage of the Ewing letter: "Some stamps get listed in the catalog in mysterious ways. When Emil Bruechig first submitted his 'ultramarine shade' [now listed

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as Scott C23c], Hugh Clark sent the submitted stamps up to me at my summer home in New York State.

"I was then serving on the Catalog Listing Committee of the [Bureau Issues Association]. Emil wanted them listed as an 'error', but I strongly fought that term and said it was just a 'shade'. Alvin Hall, then director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, backed me up.

"Then it developed that Hughie had given Emil a promise that he would list the stamp if Emil could get a letter from the Bureau to the effect that (the) 'ultramarine' shade was an 'error'. The next thing I knew Hugh sent me a letter from the Bureau, signed by Alvin Hall, stating that the ultramarine color was in fact an error. "I dropped my fight and wrote to Alvin



A color misregistration of Scott C23, long a part of the author's own collection, also seems to be the "ultramarine" shade. Compare this color to that of the 30¢ Presidential next to it, which the Scott catalog describes as "deep ultramarine." Is it possible that the blue of both these stamps can be ultramarine?

and he wrote back that he never knowingly signed such a letter. He said that he was



often presented with a batch of letters to be signed and the letter to Emil must have been

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included in such a batch.

"The big question is 'How did such a letter get laid on Al's desk for his signature?' Anyone knows that ink left in a press over a weekend can vary in shade when the press starts up on the following Monday."

Herst suggested, but did not state, that Breuchig may have been tempted to arrange for the letter to be produced in a way that would benefit him financially, and that being the case, it should not be credited.

Herst also noted another holding of these sheets besides the examples found by

Breuchig. He wrote, "I know that [O.K.] Rumble [from Texas] had an entire pad of 100 sheets of the stamps, some 2,500 stamps."

So, my bottom line is this: I acknowledge that Scott No. C23c is a differentiable color, but believe that "ultramarine" is the wrong description. Further, I am unconvinced that it is any sort of rarity deserving of the values Scott quotes — though the only way to authenticate purported examples is from the signature marks on the backs of the Breuchig find.

And, finally, I believe that the Bureau letter signed by Alvin Hall is at best suspect in its conclusions, and that the variety is not an

error caused by use of the wrong ink.

It is unlikely that Scott will change the listing at this late date. But there are two ways to influence that outcome.

First, if any *Linn's* reader has a copy of the Bureau letter signed by Hall, I am interested in reading the exact wording used. I can be contacted at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or by mail at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125.

Second, a group of these stamps needs to be analyzed against the normal blue version of Scott C23 using the National Postal Museum's equipment. Once I have been able to arrange for that, I will report further. ■

The expectation of hope over reality: hope dashed

John Hotchner provides a personal example of the old adage "If it's too good to be real, it probably isn't!" as it applies to the methodical expertization of postage stamps and covers.

I ought to know better, but once in a while the fever that grips all of us gets me, too. Look at the postcard shown with this column. At first glance it is unremarkable, until you notice that the straight edge on the right of the 1¢ Franklin stamp is matched by a straight edge on the left.

Reference to the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* makes this stamp a presumptive Scott 316, the 1909 perforated 12 horizontal coil. The catalog value is given in italics as \$125,000 unused, with no indication that used examples are known.

A catalog note says, "All examples of [Scott] 316-318 must be accompanied by certificates of authenticity issued by recognized expertizing committees."

Because the stamp on the postcard had wide enough margins to qualify, I hoped it might have a chance at being a used Scott 316. I knew the chances of this being so were low. But I thought: nothing ventured, nothing gained.

So, I sent it to friend William T. Crowe, who at one time was the administrator for the Philatelic Foundation's expertizing service. He now does expertizing of early U.S. stamps as a lone expertizer, following in the footsteps of the late Bill Weiss (1943-2015), who issued certificates for many years. Not only did I know both of them for a long time, I had confidence in their abilities.

As a practical matter, a lone expertizer does not usually command the same level of respect from auction firms and the highest of high-end collectors as compared to expertizing committees, where multiple experts look at a stamp or cover. But I knew Crowe could tell me if the stamp had a chance at being Scott 316.

Cutting to the chase, here is what his opinion said: "Submitted as Scott Number 316, it is Scott 300, sheet stamp, which has been removed from this card and the vertical perforations at the right trimmed (to resemble a Scott 316) and replaced on this card slightly out of alignment with the original placement of the stamp."

Reality intrudes on hope once again. A good attitude for the expertizer is summarized by the old adage, "If it's too good



This average-looking postcard canceled in 1908, when the coil versions of this 1¢ Franklin were issued, bears a stamp that the author hoped might be a genuine coil. It isn't.



William Crowe's negative certificate with a large photo of the stamp on the 1908 postcard.

to be real, it probably isn't!"

The sheet stamps of this period are actually much harder to find perfectly centered than poorly centered. In addition, adjoining stamps might be of slightly different widths or heights because of the way that the perforation

wheels were set. This means that wide margins are often found that can be cut down to resemble imperforate sides.

Add to this the fact that these stamps were produced in sheets of 400, four panes of 100, cut apart into post office panes through imperforate margins between the panes. This left two sides of each post office pane imperforate.

Thus, making coils from slightly misperforated sheet stamps that already had a single side imperforate is not a difficult challenge.

Over the course of years, I have seen many examples of these ersatz coils that were poorly done and easy to detect (not enough margin, imperf margins

not straight, the nib of a perforation showing, etc.), but this time the craftsmanship was better, though still imperfect.

CANCELLATION MATCHING

One of the giveaways for the 1¢ Franklin fake was the failure of the stamp doctor to precisely match the progression of the cancellation on the card to the stamp.

A similar example was recently sent by *Linn's* reader Rich Pederson of Clemson, S.C. While describing the cover so he could list it on eBay, Pederson noticed that the Sept. 21, 1894, cancellation date predates the recorded October 1894 issuance of the 2¢ Washington Type I stamps of the 1894 issue.

Thinking that unlikely, he took a closer look at the cancellation and saw that the stamp was added after the fact. The cover doctor did a pretty good job of matching, but the killer bars on the stamp are slightly narrower than those on the cover.

In addition, Pederson lifted the bottom corner of the stamp with tongs and saw that the original bars extend beneath the stamp.

So, this falls in the category of what you can do to be your own expertizer. It's just a matter of training yourself to be observant.

ANOTHER MISMATCH

Linn's reader Harry Chamberlain of Spring

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Hill, Fla., recently wrote with a different problem involving a mismatch.

In this case, it is between two descriptions on an expertizing certificate that accompanies a cover he owns that bears the ungrilled 2¢ Andrew Jackson stamp of 1863 (Scott 73). The Philatelic Foundation certificate is dated in 1987.

Everything about the stamp and cover is genuine, but the description leaves question marks. The first part of the write-up reads, "On cover with green Ohio town, CDS and target cancels." However, the write-up also states, "It is genuinely used on cover with the



Look carefully at the cancellation on this cover. It is genuine on the cover and on the stamp, but the cover and the stamp don't belong together. cancellation in blue green."

There is a world of difference between "green" and "blue green" when it comes to cancellations of this era. Green cancellations are relatively rare.

How rare? The Scott U.S. Specialized catalog assigns a premium of \$15 to blue cancellations (which would include blue green), and it assigns a premium value of \$600 to green cancels.

Because no scan or photograph was sufficient to determine whether the cancel is blue green or green, I asked Chamberlain to send the cover to me for a look. In my opinion, the cover bears a genuine green cancellation.

I suggested that he send it back to the Philatelic Foundation for a correction. Though the mistake occurred 30 years ago, hopefully the Foundation will oblige without additional charge. ■

1938 Eagle airmail color error revisited and verified

A rediscovery of an essay in R.H. White's *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps* answers the question as to whether the ultramarine 1938 6¢ Eagle airmail is a real error or not.

In the U.S. Stamp Notes column in the May 15 *Linn's*, I looked at the block of the 1938 6¢ Eagle airmail stamps that is shown here in the first illustration, and discussed this "ultramarine" color variety (Scott C23c) that the 2017 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* lists at \$160 for a mint single and \$1,500 for a used example.

I was less than positive about whether this is a genuine variety worthy of a color error listing. While not dismissing it entirely, I also did not buy into the rather sketchy stories that had been advanced by philatelic authors of the 1940s.

Scott describes the color of the normal version of this 6¢ airmail stamp (Scott C23) as dark blue. A pair of these stamps is shown with the C23c block.

The evidence I had when I wrote the May 15 column did not entirely agree on who and how the discovery of the ultramarine color was made or the numbers that might exist. Also, there was more than a hint of some market manipulation that occurred early on, and maybe some pay for play or other shenanigans involved in how the variety came to be listed in the catalog.

In addition, I had no reliable scientific readings to verify that this is a variety, and I had a handful of used examples of the stamp that mimic the ultramarine pretty closely.

Indeed there is quite a range of the blue color available in any accumulation of Scott C23. This is probably due to the normal variations seen in wet paper printing, wiping variations and thus inking application flaws, oxidizing, and changes due to the chemical content of water or paper when used stamps were washed from envelopes.

In any case, I was not convinced that C23c was a real error. But thanks to *Linn's* reader James Patterson, I am now a believer.

The foremost expert in color varieties on United States stamps from 1847 into the 1940s was R.H. White. His five-volume *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps*, published in the early 1980s, is one of the seminal works in all of U.S.

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The block of four 1938 6¢ Eagle airmail stamp is Scott C23c, which the catalog describes as "ultramarine and carmine." The normal C23, shown above the block, is "dark blue and carmine."

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philatelic literature and a go-to reference that I use frequently.

A companion volume, *The Papers and Gums of United States Postage Stamps 1847-1909*, that was published in 1983.

White departed from his focus on the stamps of the 1840s through 1922, to include an essay on the "Two Dollar, Three Cent Victory, and Six Cent 1918-1939 Issues" at the end of Vol. 4. *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps*. Apparently, I had forgotten all about this essay.

Because it is scholarship at its finest, is conclusive about the existence of Scott C23c and allows us to put this question to bed, I will quote White's analysis in some detail:

"During the past forty years a number of articles or editorial pieces have appeared in philatelic publications presenting the pros and cons on the subject of the blue and carmine normal printings versus the ultramarine and carmine specimens which have been reported.

"The genesis of the story of this stamp has its tragi-comedy aspects when one reads through the literature. As pointless as the continuing debate seems to be, there are some scientific facts which all concerned should consider carefully before offering more opinions on the subject.

"[Viewing my color plate and] Using the nearly solid but finely lined section of the shield medallion at the top as a target, a quick alternation of focus between this area on each stamp reveals a difference in color. The medallion on the blue version is characteristically less red than that on the stamp purported to be ultramarine. The curved ornament designs directly above the numeral 6 also shows this difference in color; the right-hand 'blue' is virtually free of the reddish hue present on the ultramarine example.

"... However, in the case of these two stamps, an 8x magnification clearly reveals the C23 to be bluer (less purple) than the specimen identified as C23c. Brighter ultramarine examples of C23c have been reported.

"Because an unequal degree of inking or a slight discoloration of the paper on the C23c exists, a non-destructive ink analysis was performed. The results are conclusive, if alarming, to those who have had serious doubts about the possible differences between the blue and ultramarine printings.



Postage due stamps from 1879 to the 1916 issues are difficult to catalog because of the wide range of ink colors used. One reference that makes the task easier is Vol. 5 of R.H. White's *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps*. One of the many color plates from the 60-page volume is shown.

Both stamps have been printed with similar inks of varying composition. The colorant of the normal stamp is a mixture of two pigments, one classified as a mineral blue, the other a mineral ultramarine.

"The C23c specimen is also printed with ultramarine and blue colorants, but there is approximately 30% less mineral blue present. The mineral, a blue iron compound, is quite similar to the blue colorant used in some of the earliest U.S. issues and is found in most blue stamps.

"... Numerous articles on the C23 airmail have appeared in philatelic journals, magazines, and newspapers since its issuance in 1938. Most have revolved around the controversy over the existence of the ultramarine shade. The unfortunate aspect of most of the debate relates not to the facts concerning the ink composition but to the difficulty some individuals have with shades of ultramarine. It has been noted previously that ultramarine blues are 'redder' than iron blues.

"When both colorants are used to affect a certain type of 'blue' color, the problem is intensified. None of the C23's examined is completely free of the ultramarine pigment. Whether intentional or not, the two stamps

are appreciably different, both chemically and spectrophotometrically. One can be easily distinguished from the other, if not by the color perception acuity of the collector, then by readily available color analysis services."

Bottom line: Scott C23c exists and deserves to be listed as an error. Examples must be expertized.

POSTAGE DUE COLORS

Linn's reader M. Denis recently asked, "How can a working-man collector be sure he is purchasing an authentic catalogue numbered postage due stamp from 1879 to 1916, with the huge variances of shades observed?"

What is behind the question is that most of the used, and many of the mint postage dues of this era don't have high catalog values, so expertizing is not cost-effective. However, there are often two or more colors listed for each individual major number, and sometimes the only way to tell which major number stamp you have or are looking at is to properly determine the color.

An example is the 2¢ postage due first issued in 1894. Scott-listed color varieties include: vermilion, deep vermilion, claret, deep claret, lake, carmine lake, rose, rose-red, dull rose, bright rose, carmine rose, rose carmine, and carmine. And there are other shades not listed.

The 1879, 1884 and 1891 postage due stamps share the same design, are all perforated 12, and were all printed on unwatermarked paper. The only way to tell the three printings apart is the color: The 1879 issue is brown, the 1884 is red brown, and the 1891 is bright claret. But within each postage due listing there are varieties, such as pale brown, deep brown, yellowish brown, pale red brown, deep red brown, light claret, and dark claret. What's a collector to do?

The best reference is, again, R.H. White. Vol. 5 of his color study is called *Postage Due Issues: 1879-1916*. It includes 60 pages of both text and color plates that make it possible to determine the proper descriptor for the example you have or are considering buying.

The White books are out of print, and when they are found for sale, they are not cheap. But quality never is.

There are fallbacks. First, you can build your own reference by using identified color illustrations from auction catalogs. Also, you

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can develop a reference to the most often-seen colors using mint or used stamps that have been reliably identified as to color and catalog number. Mint is preferable, but where those are expensive, a used example may have to do.

The question is timely as the great majority of early generations of U.S. collectors paid little attention to U.S. issues past the airmail listings in the catalog. But of late, the so-called back-of-the-book issues have been growing in popularity as early regular issues have climbed in value. ■

More examples of what doesn't need to be expertized

Odd items, such as stamplike labels and misperforations, may need identification, but not expertizing. Quick I.D., an American Philatelic Service launched in 2005, can help.

About a year ago, I discussed instances of stamps that don't need to be expertized (*Linn's*, Aug. 15, 2016, and Sept. 19, 2016). Two excellent examples that I'd like to share recently came across my desk.

The first item is courtesy of *Linn's* reader Steve Kotler from San Francisco.

In the 1964 United States presidential election, Republican Barry Goldwater ran against President Lyndon Johnson. There were other candidates as well, including the fabled Alfred E. Neuman, fictional symbol of *Mad* magazine.

Mad hyped the effort and magazine sales by creating a stamplike label, or cinderella, picturing Neuman and his campaign slogan, "What — Me Worry?"

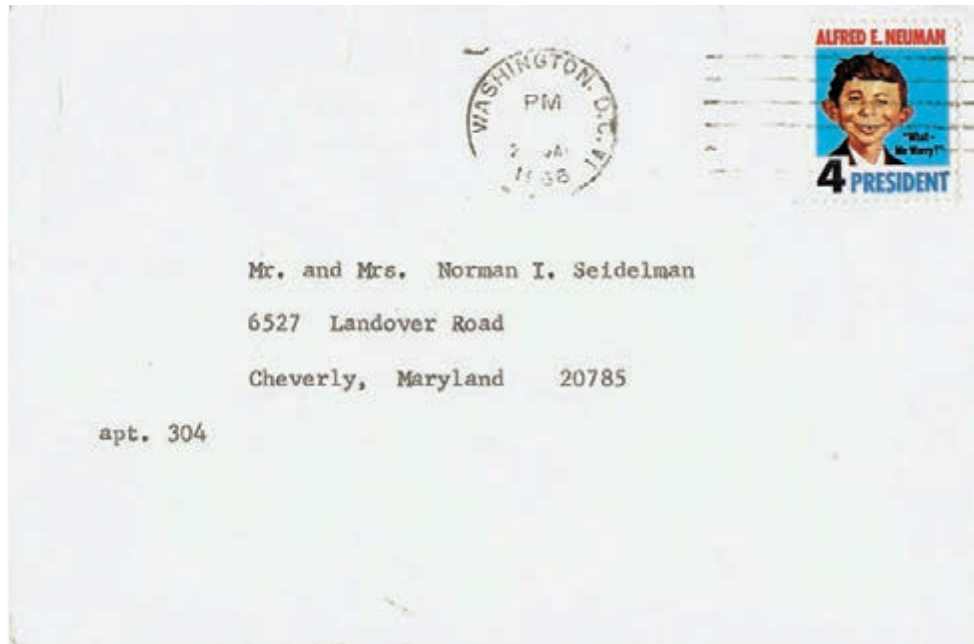
If ever an item did not need to be expertized, this is it. These labels are not rare, have essentially pennies worth of value, and the market for them is, shall we say, thin.

But where did Kotler find it? On eBay, together with an expert certificate stating: "It is genuine unused, o.g. never hinged. Alfred E. Neuman for President stamp from MAD Magazine's 'More Trash' issue of 1964. Issued in 1964, this stamp parodied the election between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater."

I don't know what the start price was, but the item did not sell. As this is being written, the label has been relisted with a "buy it now" price of \$15 (or best offer), plus free shipping. Contrast this with other listings for the



A stamplike presidential campaign label featuring *Mad* magazine's Alfred E. Neuman was produced in 1964. Neuman went on to run — unsuccessfully — several more times.



While the 1964 campaign label featuring Alfred E. Neuman from *Mad* magazine is not hard to find, a solo use on cover without any postage due is another story.

Neuman campaign label that offer multiples at an average of a \$1 each — but of course they don't have an expert certificate.

There is a rarity associated with this cinderella, and it is shown in the second illustration: Neuman on cover. No expertizing required for this either.

The label was used in 1966 from Washington, D.C., to an address in suburban Maryland. The cover was processed and delivered without a second thought — and with no postage due assessed.

On a more serious note, another reader sent in the perforated 11 by 10½ version of the Fourth Bureau issue 2¢ George Washington stamp (Scott 634). The stamp is misperforated and contains 100 percent of the plate number, 19929, which would normally be in the selvage next to the stamp.

The owner asked two questions: "Would this stamp be classed as an error, freak, or oddity?" and "Is it worth getting it expertized?"

Last question first: There is nothing to be gained by getting this stamp expertized. It is what it is. It could not be credibly faked. It is misperforated. Unless the owner wanted to get



This 2¢ Washington stamp (Scott 634) is perforated so poorly that the plate number, 19929, is completely within the stamp.

an opinion on original gum, or lack of a hinge mark, expertizing would be a waste of money.

Also, the plate number is genuine. According to the 2016 *Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog* (published by the United States Stamp Society), this number was used for Scott 634 only, so there is no mistaking what stamp it is.

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As to how to class the variety, Scott and I disagree on whether this should be classed as a catalog-listed error. I think it should. It is major. It is total. It is a scarce phenomenon. But though the Scott editors may agree with all those observations, the concept of adding a potentially unlimited number of such errors to the catalog likely dissuades them from doing so.

Remember that if sheet stamps with 100-percent plate numbers were included in the catalog, then similar material on coils and booklet panes would have to be included as well, probably with the plate numbers specified.

APS QUICK ID

How many times have you held in your hand a stamp with inscriptions in a foreign language that you can't find in your catalogs? Or you have a U.S. stamp that could be one of several different catalog numbers. It has happened to just about all of us.

In 2005, the American Philatelic Society introduced a rapid means of identifying puzzling or problematic stamps that do not require expertizing. Called APS Quick I.D., it is now handling more than 1,000 submissions a year.

Here is how it is described in the APS flyer

presenting the program:
 "Are you considering buying a stamp online, but aren't sure stamp online, but aren't sure it is properly identified? Or maybe you have a question about a stamp you already own. Quick I.D., a member service offered by the American Philatelic Society, can help identify that troubling stamp at a low cost.
 "For the collectors who have computer scanning capabilities, the process is quick and easy. Visit the website stamps.org/stamp-identification



The header for this American Philatelic Society flyer promoting Quick I.D. presents a few of the stamps that the service can help to identify.

collectors who have computer scanning capabilities, the process is quick and easy. Visit the website stamps.org/stamp-identification

and follow the instructions.
 "Provide a scan of each item you wish identified and send it to Quick I.D. as a .gif or .jpeg. It is surprising how much you can learn about a stamp or cover from a good scan.
 "Send as many scans as you need, but send only one item per scan. Blocks, covers, or sheets will be counted as a single item. Sets of stamps may be submitted in a single scan, but the opinion will usually apply to one stamp in that set."

"Quick I.D. Fees: \$5 per scanned item (APS member price), or \$10 per scanned item (non-APS member price).

"If questions about the authenticity of an item arise from viewing the scan, we will recommend that you submit the piece to the APEX [American Philatelic Expertizing Service] for expertizing."

The latter sentence is important: Quick I.D. does not substitute for expertizing when needed, but it can eliminate the need for expertizing in a great many cases, such as the two described in this column.

Think of it as a means of triage to determine what needs to be expertized versus what is easily identifiable for what it is — or what it isn't. An obvious forgery or repaired item would be identified as such by Quick I.D. ■

The expertizer's mind-set: skepticism and review

Sometimes what looks like a stamp error is something else entirely. John Hotchner provides three examples and explains how a stamp expertizer would examine and test such stamps.

"I'm from Missouri" is a good approach to expertizing. Missouri's unofficial nickname is "The Show-Me State" because its citizens are reputed to be skeptics. Experts take nothing on faith, and can't afford the luxury of snap judgment or even educated assumption.

The reason is that others are going to be making financial decisions based on your opinion, and the hobby itself may be expanded or diminished because of your conclusions about the stamp or cover (the patient) being examined.

For these reasons, most experts I have talked with start from the position that an item that they have been asked to examine can be faked, and before they can say it hasn't been faked, it must be subjected to review using every bit of knowledge they have, plus whatever information and tools they have available.

Let's take, for example, a purported color-omitted error of the 1981 18¢ Battle of Yorktown/Battle of the Virginia Capes se-tenant pair (Scott 1938a).

In the illustration, the pair submitted for expertizing is shown at top, and a normal pair is at bottom. How can an expertizer reach a valid conclusion as to whether the top pair is a genuine error, an almost error, or an alteration masquerading as an error?

What's "an almost error"? That would be a stamp that is genuine, looks like an error, but has evidence that what appears to be missing is actually present.

For a missing color, it might be dots of color where they are supposed to be, but they are too few and too small to be seen by the eye unaided. A 10-power magnifier might suffice for inspecting the stamp, but a 30-power magnifier is better.

The first thing the expertizer will want to do is to check the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* and the *Scott Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps* by Stephen R. Datz to see if there is a known error to match. It is not fatal if there isn't, but it is a strike against the patient. There also may be a catalog note warning that printer's waste exists, or a note that



Shown at top is a 1981 18¢ se-tenant pair of Battle of Yorktown/Battle of the Virginia Capes stamps that was submitted for expertizing as an error missing the engraved black color. A normal pair is shown at bottom. A quick visual comparison of the two pairs gives a positive result, but if you look a lot closer — especially under magnification — you might find something else.

provides other useful information.

In the case of Scott 1938a, the Scott U.S. Specialized catalog lists two missing-color errors: "black (engr., inscriptions) omitted" (1938b) and "black 'litho' omitted" (1938d). There are no additional notes. Datz expands on the catalog listing and also depicts both of these missing-color errors. The patient resembles 1938b with the omitted black inscriptions.

Next, it is important to compare the patient to a known genuine example of the stamp or stamps. By doing this, the expert can compare the white around the margin and other white areas in the stamp design with the normal. Often, an altered stamp will show the white areas to have been affected by the agent that changed or faded out the purported missing color, be it sunlight or a chemical. Our patient passes this test.

The next side-by-side comparison is to look at the areas where the missing color should be. Here we use the aforementioned 30-power magnifier to verify that all the black

color is indeed missing. The normal pair shows us where to look. The patient does not pass this test; there are dots of black color in the area of the "18c usa" on both stamps.

To qualify as an error, the color omitted must be 100 percent omitted. So, this pair will get a certificate stating, "United States, Scott No. 1938a with just traces of black on both stamps, unused, full original gum, never hinged, genuine in all respects."

In other words, this is one of those "almost errors." It is totally genuine, but not the error.

The second example is a 22¢ Love stamp of 1986 (Scott 2202) that was submitted as "missing brown." The first problem is that there is no catalog listing for any missing color on this stamp. While it is not impossible for a new error to be discovered, the further away from date of issue that we get, the less likely that is to happen.

The second problem requires that expertizers know about different printing techniques, and the properties of each on

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Walt Disney's face seems to be different colors on these two 1968 photogravure-printed 6¢ commemorative stamps. Is there a color missing? Use of a 30-power magnifier tells the tale.

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Five colors were used to print this stamp: yellow, red, blue, black, and tan. Disney's face is made up mostly of yellow and tan. If you look at the darker face under 30-power magnification, you will see it has a lot more tan coloring. This has led some to think that the lighter-face stamps are missing a color. Their supposition can be encouraged by the fact that there are three color-omitted errors listed for the Walt Disney stamp: ocher (tan) omitted, black omitted, and blue omitted.

But a look under 30-power magnification tells us that every color is present, just in different intensities from one stamp to the other.

Thus, this is not an error, but an example of the fact that there is a range of normal in the colors for a great many stamps printed by photogravure.

In future columns, I will discuss how an expert looks at some of the other problems that patients present. But for this time, I hope that the explanations about these three patients give you a sense of the complexity that can be encountered. ■

Beware unsupported, exaggerated claims on eBay

Caveat Emptor (Latin for let the buyer beware) is a good maxim to keep in mind when a stamp is offered on eBay as a rare item, but no substantive proof is offered to back up the claim.

While eBay is a wonderful resource for stamp collectors, as with just about every good thing, it can be a mixed blessing.

An email from a *Linn's* reader highlighted two recent listings on eBay that fall into the mixed blessing category and connect to the theme of this monthly series of columns on expertizing.

The first is a listing of a 1954 2¢ Thomas Jefferson Liberty definitive similar to the one shown with this column. The stamp offered on eBay is used and described as "very rare," though there is no support for this statement.

There is a rare 2¢ Jefferson; it is listed in the *Scott Specialized Catalog of United States Stamps and Covers* as 1033a, printed on Silkote paper. This was an experiment to try to reduce waste due to off-center perforating. A mint example is valued at \$275, a plate block at \$2,000, and an on-cover use at an amazing \$15,000.

But there is no claim in the eBay listing that the stamp offered is the Silkote variety. If there were such a claim, it would have to be backed up by an expertizing certificate.

No, this seems to be a garden variety 2¢ Jefferson, listed as a buy-it-now item on eBay for about \$13, converted from £10. Now,



A stamp much like this United States 2¢ Jefferson of the Liberty series was shown in a recent eBay listing, described as "very rare." It is a common stamp instead.



This item was offered on eBay simply as an "India State Scinde District Dawk" at the equivalent of \$65, despite having a Scott catalog value of \$26,000 if genuine. The stamp did not sell.

there's a clue. The seller is not a United States-based collector, and might not have access to a Scott catalog. It seems that the seller is simply guessing, and eBay has no mechanism that screens such listings for truth or accuracy.

Thus, the potential customer really does have to arm himself with knowledge, and keep the old saying in mind: "Let the buyer beware."

It also helps to keep in mind that no one can provide a precise, generally accepted definition of the term "very rare." Does it mean one example known, or 10, or 100?

In this instance, the "very rare" description is inappropriate in the absence of a substantiated claim that the stamp is Scott 1033a. Hundreds of millions of the basic 2¢ Jefferson stamp were produced. Indeed, the used value is the routine 25¢ that Scott uses as its minimum catalog value.

So, the take-away here is that buyers can not accept claims at face value. If you are going to spend hard-earned money, it is essential that the claim be substantiated by the noting of a certificate in the listing, and that you check your own reference material, such as a Scott catalog, to be certain that the asking price is reasonable.

The second example from an eBay listing is

advanced as a world-class rarity: the Scinde Dawk issue of India. The stamp is found at the start of Scott's India listings as A3, one of three embossed, imperforate ½-anna stamps issued for the Scinde District Post (A1-A3). The catalog value for A3 alone is \$165,000 unused, and \$26,000 used. Only one is recorded unused. The stamp listed on eBay is clearly used.

Immediately alarm bells should go off. First, there is a buy-it-now price of £50, about U.S. \$65. My correspondent reported that despite the bargain price, the stamp has not sold in two tries; this being the third try. You would think a rarity like this would be snapped up by India specialists the first time it appeared. That it has not sold is a shot across the bow.

Further, no claim is made in the eBay listing other than the description "India State Scinde District Dawk." In the absence of a statement to the contrary, one is led to assume that it is genuine.

The lack of any claims offers another warning. If this were something special, buyers should expect the seller to have and advertise a certificate, to state a catalog number, and to hype the stamp as a desirable addition to a collection. The silence on those matters is deafening.

Finally, the price of the item offered should

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The Scott catalog image for the 1852 Scinde Dawk stamp embossed in blue on white paper.

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be commensurate with the catalog value.

As if all of this were not enough, a look at the Scott catalog listings for early India reveals several facts that seal the fate of this stamp. A note after the A3 reads: "Nos. A1-A3 were issued without gum. No. A3 is embossed on red wafer. It is usually found with cracks and these examples are worth somewhat less than the values given, depending upon the degree of cracking."

The illustration for the Scott listing for the Scinde Dawk stamps is a bit of a problem because it looks like the eBay stamp, only blue instead of red. So unless you have read the fine print in the catalog, you might assume that A3 could look like that.

Because Scott A3 is a red wafer embossed on paper, the example shown with the eBay listing is clearly a fake, and it has a fake cancellation that mimics the genuine cancel of the time.

That's why no serious collector has bought this "bargain."

A NEWLY REPORTED ERROR?

Another *Linn's* reader sent the discolored 50¢ Franklin of the Third Bureau issue for examination. It is perforated gauge 11 on the top, bottom and left side, and perforated 12 on the right. The reader asked if this might be a hitherto undiscovered new error?

Given the gauge-11 perforations on three sides, the stamp can be presumed to be Scott 517, the



This discolored United States 1917 50¢ Franklin stamp is perforated on all four sides, but the perforations on the right don't match those on the other three sides. Could this be a new error?

1917 version. How does an expertizer approach this? With considerable skepticism! For a new error to appear after 100 years would be highly unusual.

The first thing to do is to verify the 11-gauge perforations using the Kiusalas gauge, which is keyed to U.S. issues of the first hundred years and measures with more precision than the standard gauge. That confirmed that the 11-gauge perforations are genuine, meaning that the basic stamp is indeed Scott 517, and not one of the two perf-12 versions of this stamp (421 and 422).

This brings up the next question: Can the gauge 12 perforations at right be genuine?

To answer this, you need to find out whether a 12-gauge perforator was being used by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1917, and if so, do the right-side perforations match the proper gauge?

We needn't get to the second question, because the last use of gauge-12 perforations for regular-issue U.S. stamps was in 1914. So, perf 12 was long out-of-date by the time that perf 11 stamps were being produced.

What do we have, then? My bet is that this example of Scott 517 originally had a straight edge on the right side. Someone recognized that fully perforated stamps without a straight edge sold for more than the less-desirable straight-edge versions and "improved" it by adding perforations on the right. However, the only equipment available was gauge 12, which was less important than having holes on all four sides on the stamp. ■



A used example of the rare Scinde Dawk stamp, which is embossed on a red wax wafer. Image courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries.

Becoming a philatelic expert: Are you ready?

While expertizing stamps and covers can be challenging, it also has many rewards. John Hotchner provides guidelines to help you determine if you are up for the challenge.

There are never enough people who are willing to step forward as philatelic experts.

There are many reasons. Some collectors may be capable, but don't want the responsibility. Others have a case of terminal humility. Still others don't want to spend their limited hobby time working with other peoples' stamps and covers.

All of these are understandable. However, I would argue that someone has to do this work, and first, making the commitment to go down this path can be a bit of payback for the happy hours that the hobby has given you. Second, you will be repaid for your work in several ways.

In terms of cold hard cash, most expertizing enterprises pay a small per-patient (the patient is the stamp or cover that has been submitted for expertizing) amount that covers your minimal expenses and provides a little spending money. No, you won't get rich — and many experts donate the honorarium back — but you can keep it for your philatelic account.

Much more valuable is the experience and knowledge you gain in your chosen field. No one declares themselves to be an expert, and on day one suddenly knows everything there is to know.

It is only the beginning. Experts are students, and handling both the genuine and the falsified material that others send in forces the expert to dig deep into his or her knowledge base, to expand it, to develop new theories and to reach new conclusions. Sometimes what you think you know turns out to be wrong.

The knowledge you gain also can have a cash value in that you become more aware of what to avoid as a faked or altered item, and what to snap up as a bargain because it has an odd perforation or a curlicue out of place that others have missed.

The next benefit is that even if you don't own them for your own collection, how else can you handle and enjoy the rarities of your field? You get to know and study them firsthand, which beats by a country mile seeing them in an exhibit frame.

WHEN TO BEGIN?

How do you know when you are ready to take on the challenge?



This 1861 5c orange brown Thomas Jefferson stamp (Scott 30) is a genuine stamp, but has three strikes against it as noted on the PSE certificate. Does this make it uncollectible? No, but it does make it a lot less expensive.



A closer look at the United States Scott 30 stamp from the expertizing certificate.

There are several elements against which you can make that evaluation.

First, despite what I already said, humility is good. You can have pride in your knowledge without believing that you are the last word on every stamp or cover that comes before you. Knowing what you don't know is nearly as important as knowing what you do know.

Having the humility to own up when knowledge is lacking is a positive. An expert cannot guess.

Often the organization for which the expert works takes the team approach, so that there are others who look at the patient and check each other's findings.

Even the lone, highly experienced expertizer runs up against the occasional brick wall and has to call in outside help, or declare that it is impossible to reach a conclusion given the current state of technology or knowledge.

All of this translates into a high level of personal ethics. You can't wish a patient into being genuine, nor can you favor material that you know comes from a friend. And, you can't use your position as an expertizer to settle some mythical score from 20 years ago.

As to knowledge, you need a passion for the material you are working with — and not just for the most perfect and beautiful examples extant.

My friend Trish Kaufmann expressed this especially well in a recent note: "I have an extensive collection of Confederate fakes, forgeries and fantasies. They proliferate. We have evidence that it started during the war as early as 1862, as evidenced by print ads for fake stamps. People messing with covers were right on their heels. And nothing has stopped the momentum. It continues today."

What this tells me is that Kaufmann has a fascination with material from the darkest corners of the hobby. She also has a collection and a library to back it up that help her to be a knowledgeable expert. Of course, she has been doing this for years, and she continually adds to both her collection and library.

So, as with elemental knowledge, the expert must have the basics, but the fascination with the good, the bad and the ugly encourages you to build your own collection and library over time.

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A time requirement is involved in being an expert. You can't be rushed when dealing with the patients you are asked to examine.

Think of Sherlock Holmes and his penchant for taking whatever time was needed to go into his library to identify the origin of a bit of tobacco, or the precise nature and date of a previous crime. His search began with a full application of his powers of observation, augmented by facts that put his observations in context. It is not too strong a point to make that an expertizer is indeed a detective.

Finally, an expert needs tools, or access to them. Good perforation gauges, watermarking fluid, a magnifier that is 30 power to 40 power, longwave and shortwave ultraviolet lights and comparison examples are enough to solve most of the cases.

On occasion, though, analysis using expensive technology not likely to be part of a home setup will be needed. If you work with an expertizing house, you may have to suggest tests that can be performed using in-house equipment or arrange with a laboratory to have the tests done.

I hope I have not scared you off. We need new experts for both United States and foreign material, especially in the specialty areas.

If you think you have a good base to build upon, and have relevant experience in your area as a collector, author, exhibitor or in some other manner, write to your favorite expertizing enterprise and volunteer. This can be the start of a beautiful and productive relationship.

COLLECTING FLAWED STAMPS

One of the benefits of having a stamp or cover expertized goes beyond whether it is genuine as claimed. In reviewing a patient, the expertizer makes that determination, but will also note any flaws or alterations of genuine material. Those observations will be included in the certificate that results, as shown in the Professional Stamp Experts certificate for a U.S. Scott 30, the 1861 5¢ orange brown Thomas Jefferson stamp type II.

The PSE certificate states that the stamp "is genuine unused, no gum, with FAKE CANCEL, and REPERFORATED at right."

Keep in mind that Scott 30 is one of the few stamps that has a catalog value higher for used

(\$1,400 in italics in the 2018 Scott *Standard Stamp Catalogue*) than mint (\$1,200); thus the reason for the fake cancel on this example.

This sort of certificate prompted *Linn's* reader Bill Baab to write in with the following question: "There is a nationally known stamp dealer who advertises early U.S. stamps 'with minor imperfections.' My feeling is that I don't want to buy any stamps that are torn, have thins, are creased, missing perfs, etc. To me, condition is everything. Do you have any thoughts on this?"

My answer is that, first and foremost, one of the glories of stamp collecting is that each of us gets to define the parameters of our collecting, both as to subject and condition. That said, I believe that the poor relations of stampdom need a home, too. We can't all afford the most pristine of examples for our albums.

So I will buy a bargain stamp with minor imperfections to fill a space I might not otherwise ever be able to fill at full price.

One day if I hit the lottery, I'll replace all the imperfect stamps. In the meantime, I'm buying for enjoyment, not investment; and I'd rather have an example that is imperfect than no example. ■

Discovering why a modern printing flaw occurred

As the printing of stamps became more complex, so did the causes for printing flaws. The printer may be able to explain how a flaw happened. If not, a printing specialist may have the answer.

In the 19th century and even into the 20th, the art of printing was fairly simple. But the installation of ever more complex printing equipment at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing blended technology, speed, and start-to-finish production elements. The new presses were capable of printing hundreds of millions of complicated stamps in amazingly short periods of time.

As with today's automobiles, there are so many more conveniences and labor- and money-saving devices built into these presses, that we too often forget that this means there are more things that can go wrong. Often enough, the things that go wrong require expensive fixes.

Also, with each new generation of presses, a new set of unexpected problems needed to be solved, and these often affected some part of a production run. While electronic inspection for errors could and often did remove defective material from the production line, it never worked flawlessly.

The result is that stamp collectors sometimes encounter odd and unusual flaws that needed to be authenticated as genuine, and this often requires being able to explain how they could have happened.

When the BEP got out of the business of producing United States postage stamps in the early 21st century, the U.S. Postal Service contracted out stamp printing to a succession of private firms, and the same situation with defective material applied to them as well.

The flawed material produced that made it through the system ranged from the easily explainable, such as imperfs or missing colors, to the unexplainable — at least to the average stamp collector.

Many of these flawed stamps are submitted for expertizing, and expertizers can be as flummoxed as the collectors who submitted them.

The difference is that the expertizer can not just be content with identifying what the flaw is; it is important to understand, if at all possible, what caused it.

Unless expertizers can identify the press responsible and how it works, they can be left



Lightly inked repeating parallel lines are found on some photogravure-printed stamps issued between 1975 and 1982, such as the blue lines on the 1975 10c International Women's Year commemorative stamp. George Brett, an expert on the BEP, called them "chatter marks."



Gray "chatter marks" appear on the 1982 20c Christmas stamp showing a *Madonna and Child* painting by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo.

without the information essential to providing a full explanation.

So, what does an expertizer do when one of these stamps is submitted?

Expertizers used to be able to ask the printer to verify the variety and explain how it happened. When the BEP produced U.S. stamps, it was subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act because it was a government agency. The BEP may not always have been prompt, but it was thorough and helpful.

The same has not been true of the private printers. In fact, it is my understanding that the USPS has instructed them not to answer inquiries from collectors seeking information about varieties.

In a way, this is understandable as providing this information and the testing and research that goes into it can greatly increase the cost of the contracts. The only recourse is to write to the Postal Service's public affairs office asking for the information that is needed, and the USPS decides what is worth the time and expense to answer. This has been precious little in my experience.

Let's look at an example of how the BEP would respond to inquiries. Shown nearby are two examples of parallel lines covering the entire stamps, but the lines are more obvious in the selvage.

In addition to the 1975 10c International

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U.S. STAMP NOTES

Brett had, there is no doubt that his analysis was correct. This is not to say that the BEP's explanation is totally off base. It might hold true for other similar-appearing varieties. But for the stamps Brett reviewed, it did not apply.

I have two final things to mention.

First, I am in the process of getting together as many BEP explanation letters as I can find, with the object of making them available on a website at some future time. Since these letters were routinely sent in response to collectors' questions, they are dispersed throughout the philatelic community. I am asking for anyone with such a letter to provide me with a copy. I can be reached at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125, or by email at jmhstamp@verizon.net.

Second, U.S. collectors are missing a great resource if they are not members of the United States Stamp Society. Its monthly journal remains the single best source of detailed articles about U.S. stamps and their production. Membership information is available from the society's website www.usstamps.org, or from USSS Executive Secretary, Box 6634, Katy, TX 77491-6634. ■

You be the expert: items that look like errors

In researching kraft paper repair varieties for this column, John Hotchner discovered an illustration of a 2¢ Washington error hiding in plain sight in a published work.

If you were an expertizer, how would you describe the five stamp multiples shown with this column? They are four mint Fourth Bureau Issue (1922-1938) blocks and one pair, all from the perf 11 by 11 flat-plate set of 1922.

Pictured first is a 2¢ Washington block with a kraft (brown) paper repair that can be seen on the back and on the front in the diagonal gap in the third vertical row. The block has normal horizontal perforations and three rows of vertical perforations on a diagonal through the first, second and fourth vertical rows.

The second item is a similar block, without kraft paper and fully perforated vertically, but all the vertical perfs are on the diagonal.

The third, a block of nine of the 2¢, has a kraft paper repair on the back covering the bottom row. It has no vertical perforations, and only two rows of horizontal perfs on a diagonal through the top two rows. The bottom row is completely imperforate, but split on a diagonal and spliced together.

The fourth example is a 12¢ Grover Cleveland block of four with normal horizontal perfs, and an additional row of horizontal perfs through each horizontal row. It also has a kraft paper repair on the back of the top row.

The final item is a horizontal pair of 12¢ Cleveland stamps that appear to be totally imperf. There is no kraft paper repair.

Before we get to the descriptions, a little background on the use of kraft paper is helpful.

Repairs using kraft paper affect only the flat-plate printings of the early 1920s. No such repairs are known earlier; a different method of repair was used for the Third Bureau Issue (the Washington-Franklins). Also, none are known later, after the Bureau of Engraving and Printing changed over to rotary press production of sheet stamps.

Kraft paper was used for repairs and splices when the perforating process went wrong.

These stamps were printed in sheets of



Shown front and back is a block of the 1922 2¢ Washington flat plate, perf 11 by 11 stamps that were damaged and repaired during perforating. The repair was done with brown kraft paper, as can be seen on the back, and on the front in the second full vertical row of stamps.



This block of 2¢ Washington stamps was damaged in perforating. While all perforations are present, the vertical rows are misplaced. The block comes from a part of a sheet that has no kraft paper repair.

400. The sheets were inserted by hand into the perforator, which applied perforations in one direction, and cut the sheets in half. Then the half sheets of 200 were inserted for perforations in the other direction. The half sheets also were split into two 100-stamp post office panes at this stage.

If a sheet or half sheet caught an edge, or got stuck or crinkled when inserted, the



This block of nine is imperf vertically, and has a kraft paper splice over the back of the bottom row of stamps, which were split while making the repair. Because the stamps are split, they do not qualify for error status.

resulting perforations may be where they shouldn't be, may be missing in one or both directions, or may be torn.

Keep in mind that the paper used for postage stamps was expensive, and the object was to waste as little as possible. So, enough repair would be done so that the sheet could be completed, and a half or even a quarter saved as completed work.

Of course, the waste was not supposed to get into circulation, but inevitably some of it was mistakenly put in the pile of properly perforated work.

Some of these stamps would ultimately be removed by post office window clerks as defective, but some were purchased by patrons. The patrons could then decide to use the stamps as postage, or perhaps throw them away.

Also, some defective panes found their way to dealers, where they were broken up and sold to collectors. There is no doubt in my mind that all five of the items shown here came from larger kraft-paper repaired panes.

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This is scarce material, which properly identified, has value. So getting the description right is important.

Let's now look at each of the items to see how they should be described.

The first example has no vertical perforations in the third vertical row, and because of this, you as the expertizer may be tempted to call that row imperf vertically. However, because the stamps are split and spliced, they are not complete stamps and don't warrant being treated as errors.

So, both the first and second blocks are properly described as misperforated stamps with vertical perforations on the diagonal. The first block would get an additional note



Seemingly double-perfed horizontally, this block of 12¢ flat plate Grover Cleveland stamps is not a vertically imperf error because both the horizontal and vertical perforations are present. Two of the vertical holes can be seen in the margin between the stamps, though they are oriented incorrectly. There is a kraft paper repair on the back of the top row.



Fully imperf, this margin pair of 12¢ Grover Cleveland stamps might qualify for a listing in the catalog, except that there were horizontal perforations on the bottom of the pair. They have been clipped off.



Fig. 26. Front of 2c 1923 pane with combination printing errors.



Fig. 28. Back of 2c 1923 pane with combination printing errors.

These illustrations from Dr. Stanley B. Segal's *Errors, Freaks and Oddities on U.S. Stamps: Question Marks in Philately* show a 2¢ Washington pane of 100 that has 10 rows of perforations on the diagonal, but on only seven rows of stamps. As can be seen from the back, three vertical rows are totally imperf.

on the expertizing certificate about the kraft paper repair.

The third block is imperf vertically, but in addition the bottom row is totally imperf. If they were not spliced stamps, they would be candidates for listing as an error, but they are spliced on a slight diagonal — though it is an artful job and difficult to tell without a magnifier. As I have already noted, spliced stamps are not given error status.

Thus, the proper description for the third block is "Top two rows misperforated; bottom row spliced with kraft paper; the entire block imperf vertically."

The first 12¢ Cleveland piece, the block of four, is properly perforated horizontally and has no kraft paper on the reverse, but the vertical perforations are displaced so that they look like a second set of horizontal perforations. The result is a block that appears to be imperf vertically, but the vertical perfs are present but just in the wrong place, so this will not count as an error.

Nevertheless, upon occasion we see these described as the imperf vertically error (Scott 564a), which does not have the second set of perforations. For example, a recent auction improperly described a horizontal pair with the second row of perforations as an "... eye catching example of this rarely offered imperf vertically pair showing an extra horizontal row of perforations through both stamps ... Only

15 pairs reported including multiples per Datz."

The problem is that the Scott *Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps*, 16th edition, by the Stephen Datz, pictures Scott 564a without a second row of perforations.

Datz also mentions our fifth example: "Imperforate pairs of No. 564 almost certainly are trimmed from pairs of No. 564a that occurred at the top of the pane and contained a natural straight edge along the top edge."

My example is described in its certificate as "No. 564a ... genuine, natural straight edge at top with perforations trimmed off bottom."

In summary, this material is tricky, and the expert needs to understand the production process and how the stamps are sometimes misdescribed to enhance the hoped-for sale value.

Clearly, anyone contemplating purchasing one of the items as an error must insist on its having a certificate.

KRAFT-PAPER-RELATED ERROR

In preparing this article, I consulted a wonderful little book by Dr. Stanley B. Segal, *Errors, Freaks and Oddities on U.S. Stamps: Question Marks in Philately*. Published by the Bureau Issues Association (now the United States Stamp Society) in 1979, it is the first published systematic treatment of U.S. EFO categories and their causes. As such, it was

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my primer in the area when I began to get serious about this branch of U.S. stamps.

Segal's book devotes a few paragraphs to Kraft paper varieties and illustrates them with the two pictures of a 2c Washington pane that are shown on page 8.

Segal wrote the following about this upper left pane, plate number 16269, from a sheet of 400:

"In this case the upper left pane was torn and twisted during the perforating operation. The sheet was at this time retrieved by a plate printer and an on-the-spot repair was fabricated using Kraft paper tape on the reverse side. The sheet was then hand-cut into its four component panes of 100 stamps each, and by some strange quirk escaped the confines of the Bureau.

"The pane has ten rows of 'horizontal' perforations running diagonally through approximately the first six vertical rows of stamps. There are no vertical perforations because the sheet was caught before this stage and the paste-up repair made. What

initially appear to be vertical misperfs are in reality imperforate vertically errors, but with freak horizontal perforations ...

"The remainder of the pane appears completely imperforate, and this part of the pane also presents a problem to the collector, as the stamp itself was normally issued in an imperforate condition. A check of the plate numbers utilized in printing the imperforate stamps reveals that plate 16269 was never used to print them. As long as the imperforate stamps remain as part of the pane they have to be considered as major errors, but if removed there would be no way to differentiate between them and normally produced imperforate stamps of this issue."

I would argue with Segal on only two points. The minor one is that I am not sure that the plate printers made the repair. It stands to reason that the operators of the perforators would do that.

More substantial is the fact that so long as the imperforate stamps are connected to a part of the pane that shows errant

perforations, it is clear that they are errors of perforation and not the regularly issued imperfs.

Being reminded of this pane and the error, I opened my 2018 *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* to see if the imperforate error were listed. It isn't. So I asked Scott editor emeritus Jim Kloetzel, who has been for many years the man at Scott who oversees the listings for U.S. errors and varieties (among other things), whether it ought not get a listing?

Kloetzel agreed that it should be listed, but also asked if I knew the whereabouts of the pane. I don't, as I don't know how Segal's collection was dispersed. It must be out there somewhere, and both Kloetzel and I would be interested to know if it still exists whole, or if it has been broken up.

Segal's book is out of print, but it can be found on the website of the EFO Collector's Club, www.efoc.org. The United States Stamp Society also has an excellent website, available at www.usstamps.org. ■

Provocative questions receive provocative responses

In answering some tough questions, including one about the possible existence of an expertizing "mafia," John Hotchner offers a behind-the-scenes look of the expertization process.

A provocative letter sent anonymously by a *Linn's* reader in or near Philadelphia (per the cancellation on the envelope) poses several questions about expertization that beg for a response.

The first question — actually three in one — presumes dishonest intentions. While such intentions may exist, I do not believe they are pervasive.

Q: I saw an auction lot which had several stamps which received bad certificates. A dealer bought this lot. Would the dealer sell these stamps with the bad certificates? Or remove the certificates and misrepresent the stamps as genuine? What is the ethics of the auctioneer in selling the lot with bad certificates?

A: I see nothing wrong with an auctioneer or any other dealer selling properly described stamps with or without certificates. A bad certificate from the Philatelic Foundation is illustrated nearby. Ethical dealers — the great majority in my experience (certainly

those who note their membership in the American Stamp Dealers Association and/or the American Philatelic Society) — would not strip off bad certificates and sell the stamps as genuine.

Customers dealing with those few dealers who might do this have a remedy. Regarding any stamp that you have doubts about, tell the dealer that your purchase is conditional upon the stamp receiving a good certificate. Make it clear that if it fails to get one, you will return the stamp. The dealer also should agree to cover the cost of the bad certificate.

If the response you receive to this request is sputtering or argument, don't buy the stamp.

Q: Does the term State College "Mafia" ring a bell with you?

A: I can only guess what the implication is here, but it certainly isn't positive. My answer is an unequivocal NO. I speak as one who has been involved as a board member of the American Philatelic Society for 16 years (1987-2003) and since then, as an active participant in several areas of APS

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Created from imperforate William H. Seward sheet stamps (Scott 371), this purported private vending machine pair was declared to be a fake by the Philatelic Foundation.

The American Philatelic Expertizing Service

100 MATCH FACTORY PLACE
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TEL.: (814) 933-3803
Fax: 814-933-6128 E-mail: mercer@stamps.org
krharter@stamps.org

Enclosed herewith for examination is the following item believed to be:

Country _____ Cat. No. _____ Cat. Value _____
(Enter one number only)

☐ Unused o.g. ☐ Unused part o.g. ☐ Used
☐ Unused no gum ☐ On cover

Catalogue used _____ Year _____
Other information _____

The item submitted has been previously expertized ☐ yes, ☐ no.
If yes, give committee name _____

Opinion rendered _____, date _____

The following information is desired:

The item submitted is, in my opinion:

| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reprint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bogus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Counterfeit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Improperly identified. It is _____ |
| | | | | | Scott # _____ / No. _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Properly identified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Genuine in all respects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unused, full original gum (NH) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unused, previously hinged, OG |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unused, hinge remnant, OG |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unused (_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unused, no gum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Used |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Genuine but as noted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forged overprint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forged surcharge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fake grill |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fake cancellation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fiscally used |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reperforated (L, R, T, B) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fake perforations (L, R, T, B) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Perforation trimmed off (L, R, T, B) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Regummed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cleaned |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Crossed (_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thinned (_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Repaired (_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Torn (_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Altered (_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Defective (_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | See reverse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unable to render an opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1) Examiner _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) Examiner _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (3) Examiner _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) Examiner _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (5) Examiner _____ |
| Date returned to owner _____ | | | | | |

Country _____ Sentiment as Cat. No. _____ Certified as Cat. No. _____

The American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX) experts use this checklist when examining a stamp or cover. Other expertizing groups use something similar.



Shifted horizontal perforations on American Architecture series stamps can result in Scott catalog-listed errors with the red descriptive text missing beneath the design. Is this misperforated 18¢ stamp from the American Architecture series a freak or an error? A normal stamp is shown below for comparison.

Continued from page 6

governance and service to members. Also, I have been an expertizer on the roster of the American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX) since 1986.

There are those who toss around the term “elitism” when referring to APS leadership. This may relate to the question, but I have seen little sign of it. By definition, the ruling class is an elite group, but any member can be involved in APS activities and services, or run for office and thus join the elite. There are never enough volunteers willing to roll up their shirtsleeves and get to work.

However, if the letter writer is hinting at some sort of cabal that influences opinions on patients (stamps and covers being expertized) from society headquarters in Bellefonte, Pa. (not State College), that is pure fiction.

The APEX experts live all over the country. We render opinions on the patients not on their owners, who are for the most part

unidentifiable from the information we receive.

As experts, we don’t consult with each other to fix opinions and only rarely to argue the merits of a patient. Rather, we use the report form, shown nearby, to register our opinions in sequence. It is then up to the professional staff at APS headquarters to translate those opinions to language on the certificate itself.

A long-serving, ethical staff of two performs this work, and they do it without input or influence from senior staff or the APS board.

Not only is there no mafia, there is no possibility of one. If there were, I would have stumbled over it a long time ago.

All this said, there may be opinions on which reasonable people can disagree. Also, there may be the occasional opinion that is proven wrong. After all, expertizers are only human. But this in no way supports the concept that there is some sort of mafia-like enterprise manipulating opinions.

Q: Is there a glossary of terms used in writing up the certificates?

A: There is. It’s called a dictionary. Well, enough levity. It is the expertizers’ opinions that guide the preparation of the certificates, and there is no list of approved terms for expertizers. There are, however, standard categories used to describe findings in the form of categories of problem, with check boxes as shown here on the aforementioned APEX sample. Other expertizing houses use something similar.

Opinions are worthless if not precise, so expertizers can and often do take advantage of the back of the form to make additional notes to support their findings, or to express doubts about findings by the other expertizers.

As mentioned earlier, the Bellefonte APEX staff of two have the task of translating the input from expertizers into what will be noted on the certificate. Because it is only two people, there will be a high degree of consistency in the language used. Again, the same is true of other expertizing groups.

Questions regarding expertizing or anything else related to stamps and the stamp hobby are always welcome. Write to me, John Hotchner, via email at jmhstamp@verizon.net, or at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125.



Look closely at this 20¢ American Architecture series commemorative stamp. Is it a freak or an error? A normal stamp is shown for comparison.

IS IT OR ISN'T IT?

The two misperforated stamps of the 1979-82 American Architecture series shown nearby appear to be color errors because of the perforations leaving out the red text under the black architectural wonders pictured in black. The normal stamps (18¢ New York University Library by Stanford White, Scott 1928; and 20¢ Illinois Institute of Technology by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 2020) are shown for comparison.

Would you say that one or both of the misperforated stamps are true errors? If not, are both just freaks? Look carefully.

If fact, the 18¢ New York University Library stamp is an error. There is not a trace of the red brown below the building.

However, the 20¢ Illinois Institute of Technology stamp is a freak. Look below the building, and you will see that there are traces of the red lettering in the perforations. It isn’t much, but it is enough to disqualify the stamp as a true error. ■

1973 50¢ Lucy Stone stamp colors prompt questions

The 50¢ Lucy Stone stamp in the Prominent Americans series was only printed in one color — rose magenta — so what accounts for the variety of hues found on the stamp?

A question from *Linn's* reader Greg Waldecker raised an issue I have not seen addressed in the literature.

He said: "I've had a single of Scott 1293a [The 50¢ tagged Lucy Stone stamp, issued in April 1973] for years; wondering if it was a different color or just a color changeling. I've held on to it hoping to find another of the same color.

"Well, I have, and it's a plate block this time. This came from a collection where it had resided for three decades in a glassine with other, normal-color untagged 50¢ plate blocks. The color of the paper of the blocks is the same to the naked eye, while under ultraviolet light, the tagged block is just a bit whiter. The gum on both blocks is shiny. Here are two questions:

"(1) Is this a color which tends to be a changeling?

"(2) Is it possible this could be a transition color if one of the inks used to print it had run out? While I think it is a pretty significant color difference, though I imagine it may have still been within tolerances for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to put into the system."

Let's start with easy answers: This is not a stamp where we see a lot of color changelings. I can't rule it out, but it is not a routine problem. Also, because only one color was used to print this stamp, it is not likely to be the result of transition between two differently formulated colors. The different color intensities in the stamp design are the result of use of white space and the differing depth of the incised lines that carried the ink in the intaglio plates.

There are no color varieties listed for this stamp in the 2018 Scott *Specialized Catalogue*

of *United States Stamps and Covers* — not for the untagged version issued in August 1968, or for the tagged version of 1973. There isn't even a difference in color listed for these two types; both are described as "rose magenta."

I look at questions like this from the perspective of an expertizer trying to make a determination as to whether a stamp presented meets the qualifications justifying a catalog listing as a major variety or error. A large number of U.S. stamps found with significant color differences don't receive catalog listings, and there are a multitude of possible reasons for color varieties.

The standard for achieving a catalog listing has changed over the years. Look at early U.S. stamp listings, and you will see that almost every issue

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Note the six different shades of these United States 50¢ Lucy Stone plate blocks from the Prominent Americans issue first released in the mid 1960s. Are they significant enough to warrant a Scott catalog listing? The author says no, and explains why in the accompanying article.

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has multiple color varieties listed. As time passed, the number of color varieties listed for stamps declined, partially the result of advances in the consistency of ink-making and partially the result of more stringent qualifications for listing.

Today, a color variety is only listed if there is evidence that a stamp has been printed with ink meant for another stamp, or that a new batch of ink for a given stamp has undergone a change in its formulation that results in a totally differentiable color. This does not happen often.

A search of my clipping files and the online index of the *The United States Specialist*, the journal of the United States Stamp Society, revealed nothing about the 50¢ Lucy Stone's ink colors. However, there is excellent coverage on two other stamps from the Prominent Americans series — the 2¢ stamp Frank Lloyd Wright and the 20¢ George C. Marshall — in an article by Charles S. Goodman. Titled "Ink and Color Changes on 2¢ and 20¢ Prominent Americans Stamps," Goodman's article was published in the November 1989 *The United States Specialist*.

Before we get to that article, let's take a look at the six Lucy Stone plate blocks pictured on page 6. They show a considerable range of colors affecting hue, brightness and intensity.

All six are shiny gum, because there were no dull gum Lucy Stone stamps. They are all tagged, though the quality and intensity of tagging varies.

The examples from later printings — the three different hues in the top row — are softer, relatively flat and lighter than the three blocks in the bottom row. Those have a darker hue and are harsher in appearance. These three hues also seem to stand off the paper better.

These six blocks display the range of distinct colors I found in my accumulation of 28 50¢ tagged plate blocks. A larger group including untagged blocks might yield additional differentiable hues. Tagged Lucy Stone stamps were not replaced as the 50¢ stamp in inventory until issuance of the 50¢ Adm. Chester Nimitz Great Americans definitive on Feb. 22, 1985.

This means that the Lucy Stone stamps were produced over the course of 12 years, during which paper supplier contracts are likely to have changed, the tagging components may have changed, and the ink components may have been altered. This is where Goodman's *The United States Specialist* article is helpful. It presents a letter that he received from the Bureau of Engraving and



The black olive version of the 20¢ George Marshall stamp, at top, does have a Scott listing, based on its significant difference from the original deep olive caused by an ink change.

Printing that discusses the differing colors that can be found on the 2¢ and 20¢ stamps of the Prominent Americans series, circumstances that were likely in play also with the 50¢.

Here are excerpts from that letter: "Since the original printing of the 2¢ Frank Lloyd Wright postage stamp, issued in 1966, there have been several ink formula changes. A blue and black pigment change was made in 1971: Alkali Blue was substituted for Victoria Blue, and magnetic Black Iron Oxide was substituted for Furnace Black, a form of carbon black. This change resulted in easier processing during ink manufacturing. A change in extender was made, circa 1975, when polyvinyl chloride was replaced by calcium carbonate to comply with EPA and OSHA regulations, which addressed the presence of vinyl chloride monomer in polymerized polyvinyl chloride."

"The changes in formulations do not necessarily account for the range of color variations exhibited by the submitted stamps.

Because Black Iron Oxide was substituted for Furnace Black, it is possible for sedimentation to occur in a stored container of postage stamp ink. Black Iron Oxide, having a high specific gravity/density and tending to agglomerate, settles faster in postage stamp inks which have low viscosity. If this ink is not mixed shortly before use, a portion of the top layer has a high probability of being blue ..."

"The 20¢ George C. Marshall postage stamps were printed with ink containing Molybdated Chrome Orange and Chrome Yellow pigments. These pigments, which had been widely used in the printing industry, are insoluble lead compounds. BEP subsequently developed lead free inks, circa 1981, to comply with EPA and OSHA regulations concerning the use of lead containing material. The new formulations used lead-free pigments which are difficult to provide a good color match with the original formulation."

Add to these kinds of problems the possible effects of slight differences in the amount of ink deposited on the plate, and/or transferred from the plate to the paper, and possible differences over time in the coating and consistency of the paper itself. The result is that some difference in visual perception of color is just about guaranteed.

Are any of the 50¢ color varieties worth noting in the Scott U.S. Specialized? Based on concurrent practice, I would say no. There are no color varieties listed for the 2¢, and the major reason for listing one color variety, "olive black" for the 20¢ is that it is a major difference, and associated only with dull gum.

It can be argued that any collectible variety should be listed in the catalog, but that creates a whole host of problems, from catalog size, to the staff needed to pin down all the possible varieties (not just color varieties) and determine how they should be valued. All of that would add significantly to the retail cost of the catalog.

Linn's readers who would like a copy of the Goodman article of November 1989, can drop me a note, with a return stamped envelope, and 20¢ in mint postage to cover photocopying, at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125.

For those readers who enjoy U.S. philately, I highly recommend that you join the United States Stamp Society to receive its excellent monthly journal and participate in its study groups. More information is available from the society's website at www.usstamps.org, or by writing to the Executive Secretary, Box 3508, Joliet, IL 60434. ■

Are these stamps true errors or near misses?

When determining whether a stamp is an error or not, almost but not quite missing doesn't count, especially when it comes to colors and perforations.

Several readers responded to my discussion of the misperforated United States 18¢ New York University Library by Stanford White American Architecture stamps (Scott 1928) in my column in the Feb. 19 issue of *Linn's*.

In that column, I mistakenly called a top-margin single stamp an error because the misperforation cut the red brown text off the



The first and third stamps in this trio of 18¢ New York University Library stamps are varieties not errors, because the red brown text is visible in the perforation tips at top in the first stamp and at bottom in the third. A normal stamp is shown in the middle for comparison.

bottom of the stamp. The stamp is shown nearby, along with a normal stamp, and an example of misperf that almost cuts off the red brown from the bottom.

I was so intent in examining the bottom of the top-margin stamp that I didn't notice the red brown color in the perf tips at the top. Even though it is a tiny amount of the red brown and it is in the perforation teeth, this still disqualifies it as an error. The same holds true for the third stamp in the nearby illustration, as the red brown ink is present in the bottom perforation tips.

Both stamps are definitely collectible, but only as interesting varieties.

These American Architecture stamps were printed in sheets of 160, with four panes of 40 stamps each and with plate numbers to the outside of the



This strip of 10 of 1980 15¢ American Architecture stamps is a misperforation of a lower pane from a sheet of four panes. The selva above the top stamp includes text from the pane above, but the red brown text both above and below the image of Trinity Church in Boston is entirely missing on this stamp.



This 15¢ Smithsonian single from the top of a top pane has no trace of the red brown text.

This means that the misperfed top-margin 18¢ stamp comes from a lower right or lower left pane, and the misperf would have cut into the panes above. This is illustrated nearby by the 1980 15¢ strip of eight Architecture stamps depicting the Trinity Church in Boston and the Lyndhurst mansion in Tarrytown, N.Y. (Scott 1839, 1841). Note that the top stamp, which shows the church, is perfectly misperfed to exclude any red brown from the stamp, top or bottom, thus making it a true error.

The fact that red brown text is in the selva above the error marks this as having come from one of the lower panes of the sheet.

The misperfing of the 18¢ sheet would have resulted in true errors at the top of the upper panes. An example is shown in the form of the used plate single of the 15¢ Smithsonian stamp (Scott 1838). The text in red brown is missing below the image of the Smithsonian, and the top margins could only have the plate number and would be otherwise blank.

Another example of this effect is illustrated by a block of the 1977 13¢ Lafayette stamp (Scott 1716).

The block is from a top pane, and the misperf fully cuts off the red "U.S. Bicentennial 13c" from the two upper stamps, making each one of them the Scott catalog listed missing red error (Scott 1716a). The upper corner stamp also bears 60 percent of the blue plate number 37978.

Color misregistrations also can play a part in creating errors. Shown nearby is block of four 1973 11¢ Electronics Progress airmail stamps

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This plate block of the 13c Lafayette stamp has the red text misperforated out of the top stamp.

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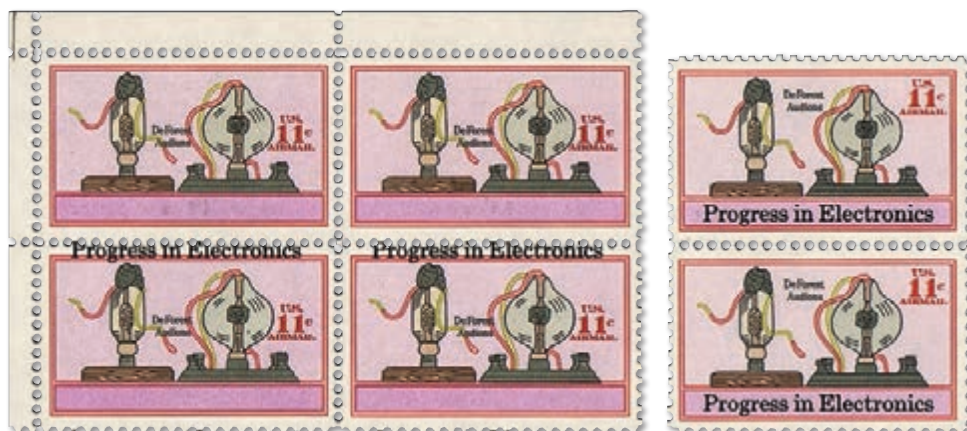
(Scott C86), and a pair of normal stamps.

The block was sold in a major auction, without a certificate, described as "Progress in Electronics omitted." It does seem like that inscription is missing, until you look closely at the top stamps with a magnifier.

The engraved black lettering of the inscription "Progress in Electronics" is 5 millimeters low, but the capital "P" and capital "E" are definitely into the perf tips of the top left stamp.

Also, the lot describer seemed to be a bit cagey in not listing this as "engraved black omitted." Note that the engraved black text "DeForrest Audions" in the center of the design is present, though shifted down. So, even if the phrase "Progress in Electronics" were completely absent from the top stamp, it would not qualify as an error as engraved black text would still be in the center of the stamp.

Another near miss is seen in one of the two 1972 8c Stamp Collecting stamps (Scott 1474) shown nearby. The stamp on the left is normal, while the stamp on the right seems to be missing the lithographed black shading dots. Most of the dots are indeed missing, but not all. A 2017 American Philatelic Society expert certificate for this stamp states, "U.S. Scott No. 1474 with just a few black dots present, unused, full original gum, never hinged, genuine in all respects."



The capitalized letters of "Progress in Electronics" are present in the top stamps of this block. Even if the phrase were missing from the stamps, this would not be an error because engraved black text "DeForrest Audions" is present in the middle of the stamps. You can see where the text should be in the normal pair at right. The block is shown courtesy of Doug Mattox of Mattox Coins and Stamps, Raleigh, N.C.



The 8c Stamp Collecting on the top seems to be missing the lithographed black shading dots when compared with the normal example below, but some of those dots were found during the expertizing process.

In other words, close, but no cigar. The stamp is known and listed with all the lithographed black omitted, but this isn't it.

The final near miss is the block of four of 1971 8c Eisenhower definitives (Scott 1402). The block is slightly misperfed, with the horizontal perfs shifted just a bit high. The cause is the preprinting paper crease, horizontally across Eisenhower's mouth in the bottom pair.



There is a large paper crease through the two bottom stamps of this 8c Eisenhower block. The crease was closed during printing and opened during perforating. Most of the text under the portrait on the bottom two stamps is missing, but there is just a bit in the perforation tips.

The crease was closed when the stamps were printed, but was opened when they were perforated. Without looking at the block with a magnifier, the bottom stamps seem to have lost the blue "Eisenhower" and red "USA". But under magnification, bits of both colors are evident in the perf tips at the bottom.

The lesson here is that very little can be taken at face value. A practiced eye aided by a magnifier will often tell you what you need to know — even if the news is not entirely welcome.

But if you have any doubt, sending your stamps to be expertized is the best course of action. ■

Double prints simulated by tagging ghosts

Tagging ghosts on stamps are usually associated with plate numbers. However, there are a few instances where they have been found doubling one or more design elements.

A recent submission to one of the expertizing services I work with brought up a common misunderstanding regarding modern United States stamps.

Take a look at the 1971 21¢ “USA” and Jet airmail stamp shown here (Scott C81). What do you see? Here’s a hint: Look at the top of the red letters.

Shown in the same illustration is a strip of three 17¢ Statue of Liberty airmail stamps (Scott C80), also a 1971 issue, that exhibits the same effect. On this strip of three, both the red and blue text are affected, with progressively more intensity starting from the top stamp and going down.

These appear to be doubled colors, and they are. The question for an expertizer is “Why is there a doubling?” Some who encounter these varieties will jump to the conclusion that they are a double print — or as Scott catalog editors call it a “double impression” — defined as two distinct but not completely congruent strikes of the plate on the paper in two passes through the press.

When that happens we have a catalog-listable error. It is a relatively rare event.

Most of what we see as doubled designs or design elements on U.S. stamps do not qualify as this type of error. They are either tagging ghosts, which I will examine in more depth in this column, or stuttering, where the plate and paper meet multiple times in one application of ink. The latter are mostly seen on the offset issues of the Washington-Franklin series.

The items illustrated with this column are all tagging ghosts. We usually see these associated with plate numbers, such as with the block of four of the 1974 10¢ Kentucky Settlement 200th Anniversary commemorative (Scott 2542) shown here.

However, there are a few instances where tagging ghosts have been found doubling one or more design elements. Two additional examples are illustrated here: a 21¢ airmail block with the doubling on a diagonal, and the 1971 8¢ Space Achievement Decade plate block (Scott 1434-1435) with the doubling below the bottom stamps.

So, how did this happen and why? The



These 1971 airmail stamps have in common a doubling of some of the lettering: red on the 21¢, and both red and blue on the 17¢. On the strip of 17¢ stamps, the doubling is most pronounced on the bottom stamp.

answer begins in 1963 when the U.S. Post Office Department began experimenting with the application of phosphorescent tagging compounds to U.S. stamps.

The initial purpose of tagging was to electronically separate domestic airmail from



Tagging ghosts are seen most often affecting plate numbers, such as on this 1974 United States 10¢ Kentucky Settlement 200th Anniversary stamp. The printed number is 35258; the ghosted number is 35255.

regular mail. Eventually, that was no longer necessary when the separate domestic airmail category was eliminated in October 1975 in favor of transmission of all first-class mail by the fastest available means.

But the experiment had been successful and provided the basis for automating a labor-intensive task: the identification for the canceling machine of the upper right front corner of each envelope where the stamp was that needed to be canceled.

How? By electronically finding on each envelope the corner bearing a tagged stamp, and arranging or “facing” the envelope so that corner would go through the canceling device.

The equipment developed for that purpose,

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called a “facercanceler,” took a jumble of letters fed in at one end and produced a neat stack of properly faced and canceled envelopes at the other.

To do this required an identifiable “signature” on stamps, in other words, something that the facer portion of the machine could recognize and act upon.

A phosphorescent and mostly colorless ink was applied by a separate sheet-fed offset press on top of the just-completed stamp designs. It’s at this point that the ghosting took place.

If the printed stamps were not yet completely dry — intaglio inks used to print plate numbers and some design elements at this time were especially slow to dry — the tagging cylinder would pick up part of the intaglio or offset ink on sheets passing through.

It would then deposit the borrowed impression with the intended tagging on the next sheet, and sometimes on several sheets.

If the sheets were in proper register as they went through the offset tagging press, the deposit of wet ink from preceding sheets is not normally evident anywhere but in the plate number, as seen here on the 10¢ Kentucky Settlement plate block.

Often, only the last one or two numbers of the plate number are different because sequential plate numbers were often paired on the press.

However, if the sheets were not in proper position as they went through the tagging press, the colors deposited with tagging would appear to double the design elements. The few of these that exist are nearly always exactly horizontal or vertical with respect to the direct print, but the diagonal impression on the 21¢ airmail is one of the most spectacular flubs you will ever see.

There is yet one more cause of doubling, and it is fairly common. Called a “double transfer,” it normally affects only a specific portion of the design of intaglio-printed stamps. It is caused by the incomplete burnishing out of a poorly done entry on a



On this United States 21¢ airmail block, the tagging cylinder picked up part of a still-wet red and blue offset impression from one sheet that had been sent into the tagging process askew, and deposited it on the next sheet.



A 7-millimeter displacement of the lunar rover and text on these two 1971 United States 8¢ Space Achievement Decade stamps is a tagging ghost image that extends into the selvage below.

printing plate. When the design is reentered, both it and the remaining design from the first try will be evident.

Double transfers are so numerous in early U.S. philately, that only major examples are listed in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*.

CURRENT LITERATURE

The March issue of the *United States Specialist*, the monthly journal of the United States Stamp Society, includes two short, illustrated articles of interest to students of fakes and forgeries and expertizing, and to collectors of the Washington-Franklin series of 1908-22.

The first is “Lot Describer’s ‘Excellent’ Coils Should Caution Those Daring to Collect Washington-Franklins” by Kevin G. Lowther. The second is “Even Cheap Stamps Get Faked Too” by Gerald Nylander.

The *United States Specialist* is always an exciting read, covering many aspects of U.S. stamps and postal history, with an emphasis on 20th-century material, and U.S. collectors would be doing themselves a favor by joining the society. Information about the organization and membership can be obtained from its website www.usstamps.org, or by writing to USSS Executive Secretary, Box 3508, Joliet, IL 60434. ■

Misperf color errors: true errors or not?

In the 50th in a series of columns on expertizing, John Hotchner shares a discussion on color-missing errors, including those caused by misperforations.

Although I am not much into celebrating anniversaries, I do want to mention that this is the 50th U.S. Stamp Notes column devoted to matters related expertizing.

In the words of Tom Lehrer in his 1950s song *Lobachevsky*, "One man deserves the credit, and one man deserves the blame." And, who is that in this case? The answer is Charles Snee, who more than four years ago asked me to write a monthly column as part of U.S. Stamp Notes with expertizing as the focus.

I would not have guessed that I could write 25 columns on the subject, let alone 50, but here we are with no end in sight. It is a tribute to *Linn's* readers who have kept this column going by sending in their comments, sharing their experiences and asking questions.

So, it seems appropriate to devote this column to reader input.

First, Jay Smith of Snow Hill, N.C., writes with a tip that ought to be self-evident but is easy to forget when a collector has a much-wanted stamp on the hook. Full disclosure: Smith is a specialist dealer in Scandinavian material and does expertizing.

Here is his tip: "The best time to have your stamps expertized is before you buy them (i.e. while you can still get a refund if there is a problem). In the age of on-line auctions and sellers cloaked behind internet identities, this could not be more important. 'Buyer beware' has never been more true!"

MISPERF COLOR ERRORS

In the age of the internet, *Linn's* readers span the globe, so I was not surprised to receive an email from Ian Billings of Norfolk, England. Like Smith, Billings is a dealer.

In the email, Billings referred to my April 16 column that discussed colors missing from stamps that have been misperforated. Two examples, the 1974 10¢ Energy Conservation stamp (Scott 1547) and the 1977 13¢ Lafayette (1716), are shown nearby.

Another more spectacular example, the 1976 31¢ Bicentennial souvenir sheet picturing Washington reviewing his ragged army at Valley Forge from a painting by William T.rego (Scott 1689), also is shown. The perfora-



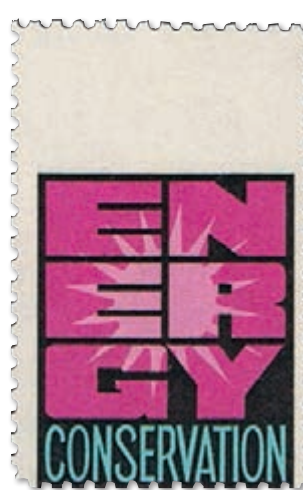
The Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamp and Covers* lists this as 1689w, "USA/31c missing on a, b, c and d. (PS)" The PS means that the missing colors are because of a perforation shift.

Billings wrote: "Your column shows me interesting differences in the way we look at errors/varieties on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

"To my mind the absence of a colour purely because of misperforation is not a true missing colour variety."

He then gave the following instances when a "real" color error occurs:

"The colour was not printed on the sheet at all — the sheet was not presented for that ink to be applied.



The top stamp of the Lafayette pair and the Energy Conservation stamp on the left are missing colors (red for Lafayette; orange, yellow and green on the Energy Conservation) because the horizontal perfs were shifted up during production. Are they genuine errors? The Scott U.S. Specialized catalog says they are.

tions are shifted up 12 millimeters, and, as a result, the denominations are missing from the first through fourth stamps.

"The ink ran out or the cylinder was lifted from the press during web printing resulting in fading, a dry print, and colour omission for that part of the web only.

"There was a paper fold resulting in the ink being printed on the back of some stamps and not on the front of those, nor on the ones that the paper was folded over."

Billings further explained, "The last of these, while producing a true variety is a freak occurrence only. The first two, and only they, produce genuine missing colour errors.

"Misperforation does not. For the colour to be missing it has to be not there where it ought to be. In this case as in all misperfs cited, the colour IS there, but misperforation has caused it to be shifted into the next stamp or to the margin."

In the case of the Bicentennial souvenir sheet, the "USA/31c" colors are clearly present below the misperforated stamps. There is nothing missing on the sheet, but Scott considers this to be an error because those colors are not on the misperforated versions of the stamps.

I mostly agree with Billings, but as an expertizer, I am bound by what the catalog lists. If a

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The perforations on this United States 1976 31¢ Bicentennial souvenir sheet are shifted up 12 millimeters, leaving the "USA/31c" outside the bounds of the misperfed stamps for the first four stamps from left. The Scott catalog lists this as 1689w.

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collector submits one of the illustrated stamps or souvenir sheets asking if it is Scott No. X, it does not matter whether I agree with the Scott catalog editor's decision to list these as errors or not. I have to say it is.

It happens that I don't agree with the Scott catalog in this instance. I wrote objecting

when the decision was made to list missing colors because of misperforation several years ago, and Scott catalog editors ignored me. Win a few, lose a few.

Where I don't agree with Billings is on his third point. If a paper fold results in a color missing on the front of a stamp, I do believe that is an error, even if the color is printed on

the reverse side.

An outstanding example is Scott 702a, the 2¢ Red Cross stamp of 1931 with the red cross missing. Only one example is known, the result of a corner fold between the application of the engraved black and the addition of the engraved red. This example is mint and is listed at \$40,000.

WHEN IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Speaking of which, Jerold Backstrom of Brainerd, Minn., recently sent me an eBay listing for the red cross missing stamp. It and a variety with a high red cross (both shown here from the listing) were offered in March for a starting bid of \$35. The listing ended April 8 with zero bids.

Why? There are a few reasons. The seller was in Russia and the point of mailing was China/Hong Kong/Taiwan (both tips to be wary), and the seller made no claim that this is the one and only missing red cross. The fakes (for that is what they are) are too clean, too well centered for this stamp, and the background is too white.

Finally, the return policy stated, "Seller does not accept returns."

I'd like to think that potential buyers also looked at the \$35 price tag and said, "Too good to be true!"

This is not the first fake stamp I have seen on eBay, and it won't be the last. But it is a good rule of thumb that if it is too good to be true, it almost always is. And be wary of any seller who will not allow you to return an item if it proves to be not genuine. ■



These two 1931 2¢ Red Cross stamps (left and center) recently were listed on eBay. The stamp on the left seems to be the unique error missing the red cross, which is listed in the Scott catalog at \$40,000. But the starting bid on eBay was given as \$35. The normal, nonerror stamp is shown on the right.

BY JOHN M. HOTCHNER

Identifying 4¢ blue Columbian errors

NEVER BUY A 4¢ COLUMBIAN BLUE (INSTEAD OF AQUAMARINE) ERROR WITHOUT A CERTIFICATE WITH A PHOTO AND DESCRIPTION THAT MATCH THE STAMP.

A friend recently wrote to me with the following question: "Attached are scans of a 4¢ Columbian that's languished in a cigar box for many years, and which to me looks like it just MIGHT be the Blue color variety (rather than the normal Ultramarine) — Scott 233a.

"I well understand that if genuine, it would be one of those great rarities — particularly since Scott notes that most used examples of this stamp are in somewhat ragged condition. I see that one of these, with tears, etc. was being offered on eBay for \$2,999.99. Scanning through all the other

233s being offered on eBay right now, mine certainly looks BLUER than any of those illustrated (even discounting scanner variations)

"I know this is one of those items that would need an expertizing certificate to show it being genuine, but I'm asking your thoughts in advance of that — don't want to waste the time and money otherwise."

The scanned image of the 4¢ Columbian my friend was writing about is shown nearby, along with a normal 1¢ blue Columbian. I agree that it is not a normal ultramarine example, but I don't think it qualifies as the blue error. Beyond that it's hard to know where to start in answering this question, but let's begin with the listing in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*.

Scott 233 is the 4¢ Columbian, for which



Is the 4¢ Columbian (shown above from a scan) the blue error? Probably not, but it is impossible to tell from a scan. Some think the 4¢ blue Columbian error matches the blue of the 1¢ Columbian. It is close, but not an exact match.



The distinctive blue error of the 4¢ Columbian is shown on this page (Plate II-17) from R.H. White's authoritative *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps, Vol. II*, (1981). Ultramarine shade varieties also are shown.

the normal color is listed as ultramarine. Listed variants of this color are dull ultramarine and deep ultramarine. The 2018 Scott U.S. Specialized values the normal stamp and these shade varieties at \$50 mint for hinged examples and \$8 used.

The error is listed as Scott 233a, "4¢ Blue (error)" with a hinged value of \$17,500, and a used value

of \$16,500. A note below the listing begins, "No. 233a exists in two shades." Scott does not further identify what these shades.

The listing continues, "No. 233a is valued with small faults, as almost all examples come thus."

R.H. White, in his monumental *Encyclopedia of the Colors of United States Postage Stamps*,

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Vol. II (1981), illustrates the known colors as shown on page 6.

White quotes early 20th-century philatelic scholar Lester Brookman as saying, "...The [blue] shade is very different from the normal ultramarine ... The usual statement that it is like the color of the 1¢ is not exactly accurate. It is much more like the 1¢ than it is the normal 4¢ but the color seems to be ... more lively ... than that of the 1¢."

How many examples of the 4¢ blue Columbian error exist? There is no reliable answer. The original find was a single mint sheet of 100, but subsequent finds of used examples indicate that several sheets of the error were not recognized, and the stamps were used on mail. Thus, it is possible that previously unidentified examples may lurk in old collections.

With that background, let's make a few observations. First and foremost, a collector should NEVER offer or buy a 4¢ Columbian represented to be the blue error (Scott 233a) unless it has a certificate with a photo and description that exactly match the stamp. It does not matter how great a bargain it seems to be.

Why is this? Unless a collector has handled many examples of Scott 233, or has a reference example of 233a, or a high-quality color photo, it is purely a guess as to whether the stamp in hand is a 233a.

Given the values involved, it is simply

too easy to diagnose a stamp in hand as what the collector wishes it to be, with whatever evidence the collector may be able to find "on the fly."

Other factors at play with used stamps are that the aging of the paper, happenstance contact with strong light or chemicals, or specific efforts to alter can result in subtle changes of color that may push the color toward the target variety. For these reasons, expertizing is essential.

As I've said many times in this column, it is not possible to positively expertize from a scanned image. The actual stamp must be viewed by the expertizer.

Sometimes it is possible to rule out a stamp based on a scanned image, and, in the case of the stamp my friend wrote about, it is clear that he would not have spent his money wisely to have the stamp expertized.

In fact, given the costs involved, it is not a good idea to submit such a stamp "cold" for expertizing as the chances of it being genuine are small.


Instead if you have a competent dealer in your local stamp club, or can talk with one at a

local show or bourse, show it to him and ask him if he thinks it has a better than 75-percent chance of being found genuine.

If you can match your stamp to a reliable photo of an expertized Scott 233a in a reference book or commercial auction and you can get a dealer recommendation, then the stamp may stand a reasonably good chance of passing muster.

This brings up another bit of correspondence from a *Linn's* reader, who asked, "Could you send me the basic expertizing fees? Do they go by catalog value? What is the cost if the stamp is a fake?"

Fee structure can be complicated, and fees can change periodically, so I do not have a cheat sheet that explains the fees for each of the expertizing organizations.

My suggestion is that if you want to determine the fee that applies for a specific stamp you are considering submitting begin by searching online for the auction house, then find its fee structure, what it is based on, and under what circumstance the auction house will refund all or part of the fee. 

BY JOHN M. HOTCHNER

Stamps that look like errors but aren't

PRINTER'S WASTE IS UNFINISHED STAMP MATERIAL INTENDED TO BE DESTROYED
THAT HAS MADE ITS WAY OUT THE BACK DOOR OF SECURITY PRINTERS.



Figure 1. This 1975 10c Collective Bargaining plate block looks like it could be an imperforate error, however, it is printer's waste. A tip-off is the over-wide margin with the complete color blocks, most of which normally would be trimmed off in the production process.

A *Linn's* reader recently sent for expertization an imperforate pair of the 1975 10c Collective Bargaining commemorative stamp (Scott 1558) fully expecting to receive a good certificate. Instead what he got was a certificate saying that the pair was printer's waste, not a genuine error.

A plate block of Collective Bargaining imperf waste is shown in Figure 1.

The reader had never heard of printer's waste and wanted to know what it is. He also wanted to know why, despite having no hint of perforating pins touching the paper, the imperf pair was not an error.

In looking at the term in the broadest sense, all incomplete and/or improperly produced product is technically printer's waste in that it should be excised from the production process and destroyed. The vast majority of such material is destroyed. Consider how little flawed material gets out compared to the billions of perfect stamps that are produced.

But here we are talking about printer's waste as a term of art, not in the broad

sense, and as such, it has a very specific meaning.

Errors are stamps that reach the end of the production process without being completed (for example, no perforations, one or more colors omitted), or have a major flaw (inverted color, inverted perforations, the wrong watermark, or with a color intended for a different stamp).

Errors should have been identified, excised and destroyed, but instead they made it through the process, were packaged with perfect material, and were sold over a post office counter.

Printer's waste, on the other hand, is flawed material that was identified for destruction, excised and placed in containers to be destroyed. But instead of being destroyed, it was either stolen by printing plant employees (a rare occurrence) or lifted by outsiders involved in the destruction process, which is usually contracted out.

After the theft occurred, the stolen material was shopped either to stamp collectors, or if available in sufficient quantity, sold and used as postage.

Because of the element of theft and the lack of distribution through a postal outlet, there is a certain smell that attaches itself to such material, and, when it can be proven that it is printer's waste, many collectors avoid it.

Those who do collect printer's waste tend to pay less for it than for certifiable errors.

How to identify printer's



Figure 2. Printer's waste is often unfinished material excised from the production process. The 2c Fourth Bureau issue George Washington block is from material used to dry a plate that was being cleaned.



Figure 3. This 1980 15c Benjamin Banneker block of four stamps was removed from production because of color misregistration.

waste? There are several ways:

1. Check the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*. When the editors are aware of instances of specific error-like material

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Figure 4. Torn items such as these 2¢ Jackson and 13¢ Flag over Capitol stamp multiples qualify only as printer's waste.

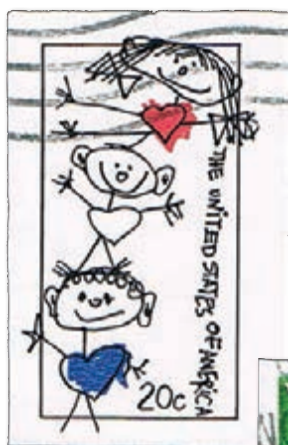
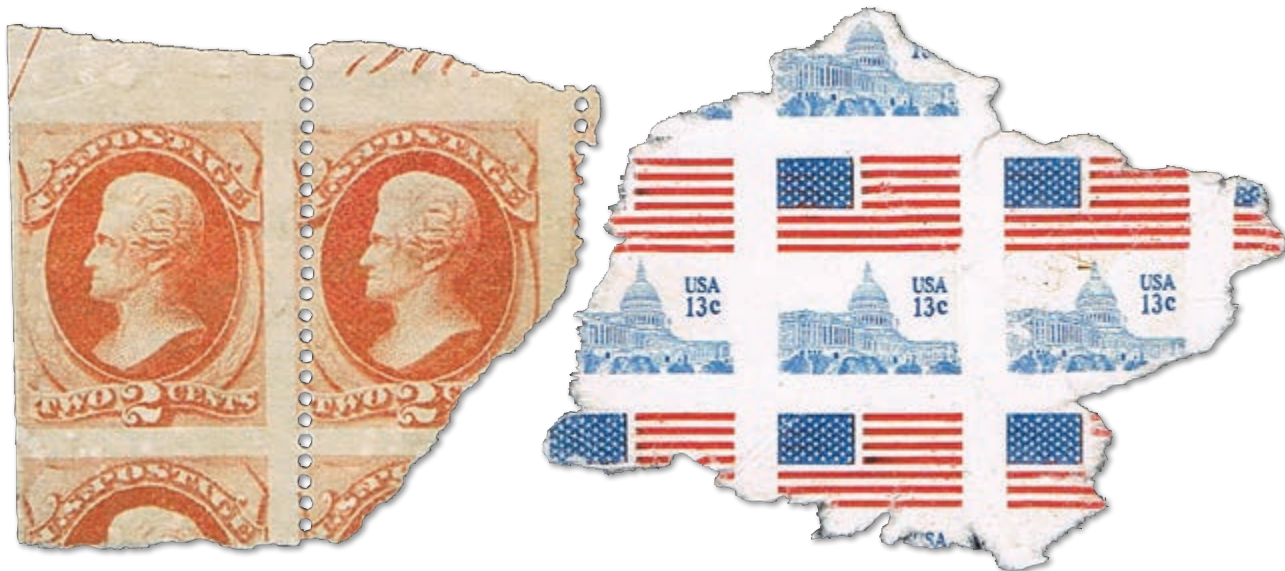


Figure 5. When imperf singles such as these 1984 20¢ Family Unity and 1987 22¢ William Faulkner examples are found, it is a good bet they are from printer's waste sold to mailers. Neither stamp is known to have been found as mint full imperf errors.



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that is actually printer's waste, it is mentioned in the catalog.

In the case of the Collective Bargaining pair, the note under the listing in the Scott U.S. Specialized reads, "Imperforates exist from printer's waste."

2. Another reference source is the Scott *Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps* by Stephen R. Datz (16th Edition). This catalog includes a six-page section picturing more than 30 examples that are known to be printer's waste.

3. Some printer's waste is obvious because it is incomplete or improperly printed from a given point on, such as an omitted color that also has no tagging and no perforations.

The poorly printed block with no perforations and no gum of the Fourth Bureau issue 2¢ George Washington shown in Figure 2 is an example. The 1980 15¢ Benjamin Banneker block with misregistered colors and no perforations, shown in Figure 3, is another.

4. Material is at best suspect if it is crinkled, folded, torn apart roughly, has obvi-

ous fingerprints, is ungummed, and/or has excess marginal paper or gutter between stamps that should not have it. Two examples are shown in Figure 4: the 2¢ Jackson and the 1977 13¢ Flag over Capitol multiples.

5. Some thefts have become public knowledge because of criminal charges and court cases.

6. In the few instances when only used clearly imperforate singles are known, it can reasonably be inferred that they are printer's waste. Figure 5 depicts 1984 20¢ Family Unity and 1987 22¢ William Faulkner stamps that are examples of this.

We're not out of the woods yet when it comes to error look-alikes. There are two more to mention.

First, there have been instances in which proof material has gotten out to the public — usually from private sector contract printers. Because it is almost always imperforate, it can mimic errors.

It also is identified in the Scott U.S. Specialized catalog, and the Datz catalog has a 15-page section under the heading "Error-like Imperforates." Perhaps I will take a look at some of that material in a future column.

Finally, there is another prob-



Figure 6. Torn from an imperforate press sheet available to collectors, this 2013 33¢ Golden Delicious Apple stamp imitates printer's waste, but it doesn't qualify as such.

lem of more recent vintage. My friend Steve Schumann recently came across the imperforate 33¢ Golden Delicious Apple stamp that is shown in Figure 6. This stamp is part of a block of four issued in 2013 (Scott 4727-4730).

This example fits a couple of the criteria for printer's waste, and that was my initial assessment. But consulting the Scott U.S. Specialized, I found the following note below the listing for this block, "Die cut and imperforate uncut press sheets of Nos. 4727-4730 were made available for sale."

Thus what we actually have is a single imperf cut from an imperf press sheet, making it neither an error nor printer's waste. So, in the era of press sheets, we have another reason why what seems like an error isn't. ■

BY JOHN M. HOTCHNER

Personal standards and expertizing

THE STAMP HINGE IS A USEFUL TOOL BUT CAN ALSO PRESENT PROBLEMS. HOW DO COLLECTORS HANDLE HINGES ATTACHED TO MINT STAMPS IN THEIR COLLECTIONS?

Linn's reader Bob Finch recently wrote in with questions about hinges. Here is his email: "I am having, and have always had, significant difficulty regarding stamp hinges

attached to some of my purchases, and in my collection. I can find no definitive guidance regarding how to deal with them! I've looked at a gazillion 'how to' books and publications but nobody seems to want to provide real guidance on this



Figure 1. A mint example of the 1935 United States federal duck stamp (Scott RW2).

subject. For example, if the hinge is 'sticky' and can't be removed, should it be left intact or trimmed off so that the stamp can be mounted? There seem to be volumes written on the chemistry of adhesives, but little about the practical, real-life problems of dealing with hinges ...

"Here's a specific example of my concern. Had an excellent RW2, which had a clunky hinge remnant on the original gum. Used my humidity 'box' to soften the gum so I could remove the hinge. Easily removed it with no damage, and the gum smoothed by itself since it was moist — gorgeous result!

"An expertizing house called it Disturbed Original Gum (DOG), which is correct, but hurts the value big-time. This is what I'm trying to address."

The expertizer strives for accuracy without regard to value. So the disturbed gum description is indeed the correct thing to do. But the buyer of stamps has other considerations. One, the value of the stamp, is obvious. The other, what pleases the senses, may not be, though it is clear from reading Finch's note that it is of significant concern to him.

What he seems to be asking is if it is possible to enhance the value of the stamp through making it more attractive by carefully removing a hinge.

He likely accomplished that end with his 1935 federal duck stamp (Scott RW2), with an example shown in Figure 1, but there is a limit. And that limit is that there is no way to remove the hinge without leaving a tell-tale gum disturbance. No wonder he can't find anything in the literature that gives instructions on doing so.

Now, this is not to say that people don't try; which is where the expertizer comes in. I have seen some pretty good efforts — and I have no doubt that some have been good enough to pass even the most careful

expertizer. But willfully submitting a stamp as "full original gum" when the owner knows that is not the case is fraud, and "How to commit fraud" is not going to be a chapter heading in "How to" books.

Here I must mention that Finch submitted his stamp noting that it was "hinge removed" and is assuredly not guilty of fraudulent intent. Unfortunately, not everyone is that honest.

The absence of gum disturbance is not the only thing an expertizer looks at. See some examples of hinged stamps in Figure 2.

The presence of a hinge can also be a red flag when it covers a pin hole or a thin, or masks a regumming job — especially seen on early mint U.S. stamps, but damage on used stamps also can be covered by hinges. Here, dipping in watermark fluid can be the expertizer's friend.

How each of us deals with hinges is influenced by both value and attractiveness considerations: preserving maximum value, while having the stamp appeal to the collector as a fit item to fill the space in their album. I can reflect on my own practices, but I can't tell anyone else how to resolve the possibly conflicting considerations.

Let us first posit that there is inherent risk in removing hinges. I use only Denison hinges for my album collections, both for used and for inexpensive mint.

The primary virtue of Denison hinges is that they are, carefully, peelable. The bad

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Figure 2. Hinges found on early U.S. stamps are made of various material, cover varying areas of the stamps, and range from easy to very difficult to remove. The five examples pictured here show the progression.

U.S. STAMP NOTES

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news is that they are no longer produced. Nothing now produced is quite as good, and many products are inferior. I was lucky to have found a dealer with a small horde of them many years ago, and what I will do when I run out is a question that bothers me.

But the question really is what to do with stamps you buy that have heavy, unpeelable hinges.

Perhaps, if you don't much care about the back of stamps, the answer is "nothing" other than to be aware that there could be damage underneath, and to act accordingly.

If the stamp has considerable value, you might ask the seller to get it expertized; or do that yourself after establishing an agreement with the seller as to who pays if the stamp comes back with a bad

or "damaged" certificate.

Keep in mind that unless you give specific permission, expertizers will not attempt to remove hinges, and some will not remove hinges even if you do give permission.

I am not a purist who will accept only never-hinged stamps. I am not buying with an eye to resell, nor do I feel that I need to worry excessively about the part of the stamp I don't display. So, my practice is to do the best I can before adding a new acquisition to an album; not to require a pristine back.

But if you do care about the backs, or if the hinging obscures being able to check for a watermark, there are a few alternatives: The sweatbox for mint stamps, and washing the hinges off for used.

My own method is to wash used stamps in warm water and to remove by hand what I

can of hinges on mint stamps, taking care not to pull stamp paper off the back.

I use eyebrow tweezers to remove the part of the hinge that sometimes overhangs the top of the stamp, as regular stamp tongs often don't have enough grip. But if you are going to try this, practice on some cheap stamps before you try it on a more desirable example.


Rarely, it is impossible to remove hinges from old, used stamps. Either the hinging material or the adhesive itself are bonded like iron and just can't be separated.

I know of no published source that provides uniform guidance or even comprehensive recommendations, and that is probably because what you want to do depends a great deal upon your personal collecting standards.

Each stamp is its own prob-

lem with its own unique circumstances, type of hinge, type of gum, and degree of disturbance already present.

Is the potential increase in value over the hinged version worth the effort and risk to take the hinge off? We can torture ourselves with unanswerable questions, but eventually, we have to get comfortable with the fact that we will have to make value judgments, and there is no guide except your own knowledge and experience.

In expertizing, I evaluate the stamp for catalog number and to answer the submitter's question or questions without altering the state of hinges present. There are rare instances where I can't do what is asked because of the presence of the hinge or multiple hinges, but I cannot remember the last time. So it is not a pressing problem. 

BY JOHN M. HOTCHNER

A tale of three expertizing certificates: specialized stamps and dashed hopes

FIRST APPEARANCES CAN SOMETIMES BE MISLEADING. CAREFUL EXAMINATION IS NEEDED OF SOME STAMPS AND COVERS TO DETERMINE WHAT THEY ARE.

Visions of sugar plums may dance in our heads as we send off stamps and covers to be expertized, and sometimes the hope comes true. However, the three stories in this column are examples of high hopes turning to dust. Two of them were because of careful expertizing, and one was because of poor expertizing.

In my experience, flat-out mistakes in expertizing are extremely rare, but it would be foolish to maintain that they don't happen. The cover shown in Figure 1 is a case in point. Pay particular attention to the cancellation.



Figure 1. The date of this cancel on this cover was misread by one set of expertizers. But even after correction, it will still be the earliest-known use of Scott 426, the 3¢ perf 10, type I, Third Bureau Issue George Washington stamp.



Figure 2. Is this pair of 1982 United States 20¢ America's Library commemorative stamps an error with the vertical perforations omitted?

The cover was expertized in March 2001. I will forbear naming the expertizer because I want to promote care, not point fingers. It was submitted as a candidate for the earliest known use of Scott 426, the 3¢ perf. 10, type I, Third Bureau Issue George Washington stamp. The Scott *Specialized Catalog of United States Stamps and Covers* lists this stamp as having been issued on Sept. 18, 1914. The current 2018 edition of the catalog lists the earliest-known use (EKU) as Oct. 11, 1914.

The only problem is that the cancel on the cover is dated Oct. 14, although at first glance it does look like Oct. 11. It takes a closer inspection to see that what appears to be the second

"1" is actually a "4" that is hidden in the background of the stamp.

I had purchased this cover as the catalog-listed EKU and didn't notice that the cancel didn't match the certificate. It was an auctioneer to whom I sent the cover who noticed the discrepancy.

I then thought that I had paid way too much for the cover, but the story has a happy ending. The expertizing group has agreed to issue a new certificate once it can examine the cover, and Scott catalog editors have advised that this cover was the source of the current EKU listing. Furthermore, Oct. 14 will be the new EKU.

Of course, there could still

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Figure 3. Should this 2¢ carmine George Washington stamp be worth a \$500 eBay bid? The owner/lister thought so, but the Scott catalog lists a used example in better condition than this one at just 50¢.

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be other covers out there that beat the Oct. 14, 1914, date.

Figure 2 depicts what appears to be a horizontal pair of the 1982 20¢ American Libraries issue with vertical perforations omitted. The pair is also slightly misperforated horizontally, and genuine errors frequently have more than one aspect that is problematic.

But in this case, the piece is not an error. The 1984 Philatelic Foundation certificate states, "It is a genuine Scott #2015 with traces of blind perforations between the stamps."

These blind perf traces are not easy to see, and I congratulate the expressers who carefully examined this pair of stamps.

Unfortunately for the discoverer, imperforate means just exactly that. Something is imperforate or it isn't. Stamp catalogs don't describe items as "almost imperf," although I have seen that appellation used to hype varieties for sale or in auctions.

This reminds me of a recent eBay listing that was sent in by *Linn's* reader Jerold Backstrom.

Figure 3 shows the stamp from this listing: the 2¢ carmine Washington issued

in 1903 as part of the Second Bureau Issue of 1902-03 (Scott 301). It has a catalog value of 50¢ for a used example in very fine condition, which this one isn't.

And yet, the eBay seller had a starting price of \$500, despite the fact that he also describes the stamp as very good only, and calls it "brown." At least he did not ask for additional money for shipping. How does a seller calculate that this is a reasonable price for this stamp? It is impossible to say.

The final expertized item for this column is the 8-penny British stamp shown in Figure 4. My father collected Great Britain, but when he developed Parkinson's disease in 1982, that was pretty much the end of his updating his album.

So, recently when I decided to tackle that project, there were 35 years of material both he and I had accumulated that needed to be cataloged and compared against the album. It was time-consuming, but a pretty straightforward process until I came to this stamp.

Why is that? The stamp is a used example from the dark-background set of King George V definitives first issued with a light background in 1912-13. But I couldn't find a space for it in the album, nor was it listed in the Scott or Gibbons catalogs.

I wondered whether it might be a proof of an unissued stamp, but specialized literature in my library did not support that theory.

So, what could it be? If a fake starting off from the light background version, Scott 169, it was beautifully done and very convincing on its face.

The only way to find out what I had would be to send it to the world's acknowledged experts on British stamps, the Royal Philatelic Society London.

When I went to England in late July, I took the stamp with



Figure 4. Sometimes a specialized question regarding a foreign stamp, such as this unusual Great Britain 8-penny George V definitive, needs to be sent to experts abroad.

me, and my friend Chris Harman agreed to accept it for expertizing by the Royal Philatelic Society London.

About a month later, the mail brought the verdict: "8d Black on yellow paper — watermarked single cipher — variety, graduated shading around head — used — is NOT a trial printing but is the issued stamp with the background painted in."

My supposition is that my question was so specialized that had the stamp been sent to a U.S. expertizing house, it would have come back "opinion declined" with a recommendation to send it to the Royal Philatelic Society London. There are times when that is entirely appropriate.

I am sad that the stamp did not prove to be something special, but glad the mystery is solved.

THANKS

To the many *Linn's* readers who write in with observations, experiences and questions about expertizing, I find all such correspondence useful and thought-provoking. I can be reached by email at jmhstamp@verizon.net, and by mail at Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125. □

BY JOHN M. HOTCHNER

Looking for stamps missing colors not as simple as it might appear

AN EXPERTIZER TAKES A LOOK AT VARIOUS EXAMPLES IN THE SEARCH TO DETERMINE WHETHER A STAMP IS A SCOTT CATALOG LISTED ERROR OR NOT.



Figure 1. Of these stamps with omitted or partially omitted colors, only those in the upper right, the 22c Ameripex '86 stamp issued in 1985 (Scott 2145a), and upper left, the 1980 15c Gen. Bernardo de Galvez stamp (Scott 1826a), are genuine expertized errors. The 1977 13c Energy Conservation (1723) and the pair of the 1982 International Peace Garden 20c stamps (2014) are not.

Having just spent a couple of hours examining stamps that were candidates to be color-omitted errors, I think it is worthwhile to devote a column to things an expertizer looks for when one of these candidates comes in the door.

Starting from the basis that the owner believes the patient (as expertizers call a stamp submission) has a good chance of passing muster, I will break this subject into two sections: simple and complicated.

In the first category are stamps where a single color or two differentiable colors are printed and are easily seen to be omitted if they are. Colors are there or they aren't. However, even if a color appears to be omitted, that may not be the end of the story because the reason it isn't present is important.

Figure 1 shows four examples. Two of these are color-omitted errors, and two are not.

In the second category are stamps

where two or more colors are laid on top of one another to produce a third color. One example would be varying intensities of yellow dots and red dots combined to produce shades of brown, and another would be combining yellow and blue to produce green.

If the color on a given stamp does not match the color on a normal stamp, the collector may believe a color needed to get to the right shade is missing. This is especially prevalent on photogravure-printed stamps, on which every shade of the rainbow can be displayed through the combination of four basic colors: black, yellow, cyan (blue) and magenta (red).

A few stamps subject to

this form of omitted color are shown in Figure 2. Only one is a true color-omitted error.

After receiving a color-omitted patient, the first thing an expertizer does is to take a preliminary look at it. After having done this for years, the brain assesses a range of factors to arrive at one of two conclusions: possibly good (a color-omitted error) and definitely bad (not an error).

In the latter case, we are dealing with stamps that have visible bits of the purported omitted color, stamps that are totally discolored, or examples where virtually all the colors of the design are altered. About 5 to 10 percent of all submissions will be eliminated at this stage.

After this preliminary look, the expertizer checks the remaining candidates against the latest edition of the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*, and the 16th edition of the *Scott Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps* by Stephen R. Datz.

Published in 2014, the Datz catalog is slightly out of date, but if the patient is not listed in either catalog, it must be treated with extreme caution. While it is possible for new missing-color discoveries to be made long after a stamp has been issued, it is unusual.

These catalogs also include notes about known errors that can serve as helpful guides to an expertizer and details about what colors were used to produce the stamp.

Linn's U.S. Stamp Yearbooks (produced for the stamps of 1983 to 2010) are another useful resource.

The next thing to reach for is a 30x to 40x magnifier.

The inviolable rule of omitted colors is that to be a genu-

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Figure 2. These stamps have colors produced by combinations of four primary colors: the 1986 22¢ Love stamp (Scott 2202), 1978 13¢ Harriet Tubman (1744), 1991 29¢ Wood Duck (2484), 1982 20¢ Christmas (2028), 1974 10¢ Christmas Currier and Ives (1551), 1991 19¢ Fawn (2479) and 1987 22¢ Flag and Fireworks (2276d). Light prints of one color and alterations of colors by light or by chemicals can leave the impression that a color is missing. Here, the only genuine error is the 22¢ Flag stamp at lower right. The yellow is omitted from the bursts of fireworks. In addition, the magenta is misregistered high.



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ine error, every trace of the color at issue must be omitted. Our unaided 20-20 vision is not a reliable gauge.

Often, color-omitted stamps result from improperly inked plates or the press running out of ink. The latter will create "transition strips," where stamps go from fully printed, to partially printed, to a color fully omitted.

In the first category of stamps, there may be no color that the eye sees, but microscopic dots in places where there should be color will disqualify the stamp as being an error.

This is especially problematic with the second category of stamps. Gravure printing is highly accurate, but there are often gradations of normal for final colors because it is difficult to deliver the exact amount of ink of each color over an entire press run. A small difference in ink amount may result in a visually different color, even if no color is entirely missing.

The use of a magnifier is important to check whether a heavy or light print of a particular color is responsible for the odd color, or whether an intended color did not print at all.

Generally, what the expertizer is looking for is the presence of dots of color of a certain size and intensity that should be present as seen on a normal example. A light print of those dots can have a major effect on the final color — enough to convince a collector that a color must be missing.

In my experience, about 30 percent of submissions will not pass the magnification test.

For those that do, out come the ultraviolet light detectors. At this point, having a normal example of the stamp to compare with the patient is critical.

There are three possible results: no tagging where there should be tagging, tagging that is clearly altered from normal, and what appears to be normal tagging.

No tagging may actually be a positive sign as some known errors simply skipped a part of production, including tagging.

Altered tagging is disqualifying. It indicates that not only the tagging but the printed design as well have been subjected to some sort of agent that has changed the stamp from what came off the press. Another 20 to 30 percent of submissions will fail this test.

A finding of normal tagging is a good sign, but not determinative. There are some methods of altering colors that seem to have little to no effect on tagging, but they do affect the brightness of the white paper that will be evident on normal examples.

You can encounter a stamp where a color is definitely missing when viewed under magnification and where the

tagging seems to be normal, but because the white areas in the design and the frame have a dingy appearance, it is probably altered.

This tip-off is more valid with mint stamps than with used. Stamps that have gone through the mails and stamps that have been washed from envelope paper may have been subjected to substances that changed the colors, thus mimicking an error or masking an alteration.

About 30 percent of the stamps that get to this point are identifiable as altered.

It needs to be mentioned that collectors are sometimes able to submit additional evidence with a color-omitted candidate. This evidence can include prior expertization records, expert opinions, articles in the philatelic press, a statement of how the submitter obtained the stamp, or a letter from the printer who may have been asked in the past to review the stamp.

These can be helpful as the expertizer works to reach a conclusion. However, prior conclusions cannot be accepted on their face. I have even found letters from a printer that are wrong. After all, the printer may not be especially tuned in to alteration techniques.

Please keep in mind that this is a brief overview to provide a sense of how an expertizer approaches a stamp submitted as a possible color-omitted error. Most patients will yield their secrets using these methods, but others may require much more study and research.

And using these methods may result in two experts coming to different conclusions, and an extended correspondence to try to resolve the issues. However, there will be a very few cases in which agreement is not possible, resulting in a "no opinion."

Expertizing is as much art as science. ■

BY JOHN M. HOTCHNER

How long is too late to wait?

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN AN EXPERTIZER IS TAKING MONTHS TO PROVIDE AN OPINION ON A STAMP OR COVER YOU HAVE SUBMITTED FOR EXAMINATION?

I recently received this question from a *Linn's* reader: "Is six and a half months a long time to wait for stamps to be expertized?"

The answer is a resounding "yes," though there may be extenuating circumstances. The stamps in Figure 1 are examples of stamps that might take a little extra time to expertize as they can have complicating factors, such as grills, watermark varieties, slight differences in perforation measurement, and the existence of decent forgeries.

There can be valid reasons for a delayed opinion: the need to send the stamp to an expert abroad, a debate among the experts examining the stamp, family illness, etc. But there can be no valid reason for not contacting the submitter to explain the delay.

The submitter had tried contacting the expert without success. So, he wrote a complaint letter to the American Stamp Dealers Association (of which the expert is a member) and copied the expert. That got him off the dime. The reader received a phone call "reciting a litany of reasons (excuses?) for the delay" and promising a timely response going forward. He is still waiting as this is written.

I don't know who the expertizer is because that has not been shared. But I would say that any opinion that requires more than

two months needs to be explained on the initiative of the expertizing authority, be it an individual or an organization. And failing that, the submitter has every right to inquire and to receive a prompt reply.

If one is not forthcoming, writing to any organization with a disciplinary arm that an individual expert belongs to is a good idea. If dealing with an organization, writing to the supervisory authority is the way to go. Finally, if nothing else works, the harsh light of public shaming needs to be considered.

The reader who has been waiting for more than six months is not there yet, but he seems to be getting close.

He is not worried about his stamps; the expertizing au-



Figure 2. An unused example of the 1935 United States federal duck stamp (Scott RW2).

thority acknowledges having them. But he is frustrated by the long, still unsatisfactorily explained delay.

NOTING HINGING IN CERTIFICATES

In the U.S. Stamp Notes expertizing column in the Sept. 17 issue of *Linn's*, I looked at the problem of hinges, how they affect the value of stamps, and how experts describe hinging on unused stamps. That column generated a question and some comments from a *Linn's* reader that deserve further discussion.

As a preface to the question, the stamp under discussion in that column, a 1935 federal duck stamp, was unused, previously hinged; an example is shown in Figure 2.

The owner "sweated" the hinge from the stamp, resulting in no hinge remnant and very slightly disturbed gum. The expertizing certificate the owner received called this sit-

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Figure 1. What should you do when an expertizing service takes much more time than expected to render an opinion? For the three different stamps shown, grills, watermark varieties, slight differences in perforation measurement, and the existence of decent forgeries can be complicating factors in receiving a quick opinion.

U.S. STAMP NOTES

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uation "disturbed original gum."

Linn's reader Greg Waldecker asked: "Why would this certificate state 'disturbed original gum' instead of 'unused, original gum, previously hinged'?"

In Waldecker's own words, he reasons that "a stamp — especially a stamp from more than 50 years ago, before the advent of safe, archival quality mounts — was usually hinged. That was acceptable practice at the time and still is accepted today. When a potential buyer, such as myself, reads a description which says previously hinged or lightly hinged, I know what I'm getting into.

"On the other hand, disturbed original gum could mean anything from a stamp which was lightly hinged to one which had suffered complete gum glazing from being kept where heat and humidity could do their damage. Additionally, the designation of disturbed original gum also implies the possibility of nefarious actions by someone to try and 'improve' the stamp;

not what I would expect from a stamp which had its hinge removed."

This is a reasonable concern. I have not seen the stamp in question. But the owner was clear that he did not peel off the hinge, in which case Waldecker's preferred description would be accurate.

Rather, the owner sweated off the hinge, and the gum is disturbed as a result. The area of disturbance may be just the area of the hinge, or it may be a wider area. If the latter, the certificate description is proper.

If it is only a limited area where the hinge was that is affected, then the description should arguably be more focused. Perhaps, it should have been written as "disturbed original gum in the area where

the removed hinge was previously adhered."

Either way, there is no impression of a hinge remaining, so the "previously hinged" description that Waldecker prefers would not be adequate. Indeed it might actually be inaccurate if the reason for sweating the gum were to repair minor damage rather than remove a hinge. The expertizer may not know the reason for the physical evidence he sees.

If this situation seems akin to trying to determine how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, it is a reflection of the details that expertizers must consider in coming up with a proper description. What seems like a simple problem can rapidly become complex. ▣