

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club: Promoting the study, knowledge, and enjoyment of stamp collecting.

APS Chapter 1584



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Editor's Note

Dennis Buss

This issue of the Newsletter represents the second sent out this month. It is part of the Club's effort to reach out to members during the Covid-19 restrictions that prevent us from resuming our regular Finley Center meetings. We want you to know that the club is still alive and kicking. Our board members will be calling each of you asking how you are coping with the virus scare, what you have been doing with your collection these past few months and what opinion you might have about options on resuming meetings. We plan to share a summary of these phone calls with all of you. In the meantime, I hope you find this issue informative and worthwhile.

How to Tell if a Stamp Has Been Re-Gummed

Paul von Gottfried

When Rowland Hill invented the adhesive postage stamp in 1840, a thin mucilage was applied to the back. Unused stamps were not collected until the 1870's and 1880's. Collectors predominantly collected used stamps. After all, why collect a stamp not used for its intended purpose? Many stamps before 1870 were issued without gum. When unused stamps were first collected, they were either licked or pasted into albums, which were then coming into vogue. Occasionally stamps were taped down. We may look on this practice with horror now, but it was common practice until the early 1900's. Indeed, the only reference to gum during this time was on how to remove it. Since 1930 debate has raged over whether to collect stamps with original gum or not. "Is it original gum?" may be the most important question in philately today as it has taken on greater meaning than ever before.

Determining whether or not a stamp has been re-gummed is not an easy matter. Many stamps purporting to be original gum are re-gummed nowadays. Years ago only comparatively expensive stamps were re-gummed. Nowadays, a person armed with a small container of mucilage can service numerous stamps from home. A re-gummer can buy hinged stamps, wash off the gum, and re-gum them. An afternoon's work will net this moral dwarf 300 or 400 percent profit. So it behooves collectors to know how to tell original gum. It is inconvenient, expensive and time consuming to send every one of your purchases off to the Philatelic Foundation or the American Philatelic Expertization Service. Moreover, they simply use the technique outlined below.

Knowledge of stamp printing is required in identifying re-gummed stamps. When stamps are printed, they are printed on a sheet of paper that is then gummed and

perforated. This is the clue to expertizing gum. On genuinely gummed stamps the perforations are applied after the stamp has been gummed. On re-gummed stamps the gum is applied after the perforations have been made. If you take an ordinary 15c commemorative and break it from the sheet, you will notice the way the perforations slightly fray and how the gum does not extend around the perforation tips. On re-gummed stamps, the gum tends to glob on the perforation tips, extending microscopically beyond them, and making the perforation tips brittle to the touch. Sometimes the perforations curl



a little on stamps with original gum. On re-gummed stamps, the stamp is rigid and flat through the perforations. This is the major test. Re-gummers are now using micron sprayers to nearly duplicate the characteristics of genuine gum. More times than not, they wash the original "hinged" gum off the stamp and reapply, with no "hinged" characteristics. If it is important to you, the best advice is to buy never hinged stamps back to about 1920. This is the period when reasonable stocks of philatelic material were still available and so true "NH"

material could surface from these stocks when the "NH" fad began. But, before 1920 (and this is increasingly true for each decade that you go back) a hinge mark is your surest guarantee that you are indeed buying original gum.

I have included a stamp from the original set issued in 1913 by Australia, famously depicting the kangaroo. The value for a mint stamp in the 2020 Scott catalog is \$130 and \$200 for a MNH example. The stamp shown here is re-gummed. How did I determine that the stamp was re-gummed? The gum extends to the ends of the perforations. The tips of the perforations are rigid and flat. The gum is uniform and without any cracks, unusual for a stamp from 1913. Additionally, the gum is darker than stamps of Australia and specifically from this time period and particularly from this set. This is another way to tell if a stamp has been re-gummed: if the color of the gum is dissimilar to other stamps from that country of that era. Re-gummed stamps sell for less. When we resume our regular club meetings, I will bring the stamp for members to examine.



Gum is a vital determinant to stamp value. It was not always so, but now it probably will always be. But, consider this, early no gum stamps are beginning to rise as fast as original gum ones are. A perfect original gum set of Colombians would sell for about \$8,000, never hinged about \$15,000, and no gum about \$4,000. It might be too much to go out on a limb and predict the renaissance of no gum stamps, but certainly this prediction is no more outrageous than was the prediction twenty-five years ago for the immense rise of "og, NH". Original gum bears cracks and seems to adhere to the stamp paper in a way that is different from a re-gummed stamp.

But what does "never hinged" really mean anyway? It does not only mean, as some literal graders would have it "never hinged". A "NH" stamp must of course be never hinged, but it must also be, to use the German term for "never hinged," Post Office Fresh. The stamp may never have been touched with a hinge and the gum must be, in all ways, pristine. A description such as "small gum soak, and large sticky pieces of black gummed paper stuck to back, otherwise NH", means no more than "Very Fine but for small hole" or "choice but for large disfiguring tear." A stamp is either "NH" or it is not "NH;" there is no such thing as "NH but"!

Be cautious in your condemnation of re-gummed stamps though. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing", Alexander Pope wrote, and he was right. Consider this: the advent of modern stamp mounts, sealed on 2, 3, or 4 sides has put severe strain on gum. Gum, especially in hot and humid climates tend to sweat or run similar to the adhesive on Scotch tape. I have numerous Caribbean George VI stamps that are NH but the gum is darkened and streaky. They are technically original, NH gum. This streaking and darkening of gum is a natural process, but one that is hastened in its process when a stamp is in a mount. A mount is a miniature sweat box, so if you have your stamps in mounts be sure there is adhesive ventilation and that the stamps are left cool all year round. I keep stamps on stock cards that are not as 'sweaty' as stamp mounts.

Many collectors don't care if the mint stamp is original, NH gum. If you do care about this, you are in a vulnerable position. In the end your surest bet, as with most important philatelic purchases, is to buy your stamps from knowledgeable professionals. Almost all reputable dealers will sell genuine material and reimburse you if an honest mistake is made. Most Public Auction houses offer an unconditional guarantee and guarantee their opinions.

U.S. "General" First Day Covers: What Happened? Conclusion

Stephen Brett

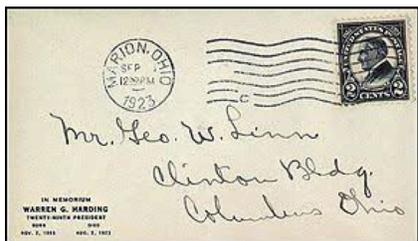
What Is The Value of a First Day Cover?

The value of the first day cover can vary widely depending upon demand. An FDC without a cachet or complimentary art piece may be considered worthless to collectors. Unparalleled pieces sell for much more. In 1996, a unique issue in the United States sold for about \$ 120,000.

Collectors can increase the value of their first day covers by selecting limited-release stamps on matching cover. An informative or complimentary cachet to the left of the stamp also increases value. Commercially printed cachets are considered less valuable than those produced in limited quantities by well-known artists.

Different Kinds of FDC's

Fleetwood began producing FDC's in 1941 with the Vermont State Issue. Mystic acquired Fleetwood in 2007. Fleetwood watermarks and uses fine linen paper on their covers. Mystic began producing FDC's in 1992 with the Pledge of Allegiance issue and ended in 2007 with the Henry W. Longfellow issue. Mystic covers have full-colored cachets and feature commemorative U.S. stamp issues at the First Class rate.

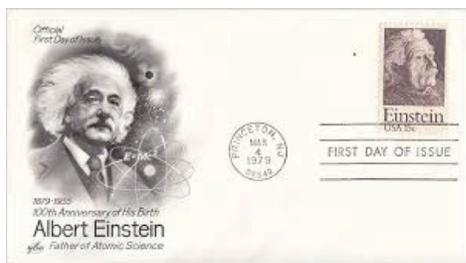


"Silk" FDC's produced by Colorano were introduced in 1971 with the America's Wool issue and finished in 2016 with the Snowflakes issue after Mystic purchased Colorano's stock the same year. Each color illustration is printed on satin-finished fabric, fastened to the cover and surrounded by a gold-embossed border. Silk FDC's feature regular issues and commemoratives. Their covers are unaddressed.

Classic FDC's are from various sources and can date from the 1920's to the present. Their cachet's are various and may be addressed or unaddressed, illustrated or not illustrated. As said earlier, George Linn is widely credited with producing the first FDC that depicted the 1923 Harding mourning stamp, US # 610. It has a simple text cachet (see above).

Some collectors make their own cachets. Thanks to the ease of printing with computers, a collector may add his or her own cachet. If one can draw, print or paint their collection need not have blank envelopes. FDC collectors always invite a good artist into the fold and anyone can become an FDC "star."

Collectors must be beware though as computers can be used to create add-on cachets for earlier (1930's and 1940's) uncacheted first day covers. While legitimate cachets have been identified and cataloged by Micahel Mellone and Earl Planty, the uninformed collector might be fooled into paying high prices for covers that appear to be classics but are modern creations.



Artcraft are perhaps the most numerous cachets available. Started in 1939, Artcraft used plain black ink engraved designs. These were well-received by collectors. Since these were produced and collected heavily, they are amongst the most common FDC's on the aftermarket. The early issues from 1939 are more difficult to come by. One should insist upon unaddressed covers.

Artmaster celebrated 50 years of FDC making in 1996. It's first cover dates May 3, 1946. It was founded by Bob and Mary Schmidt starting with a file box in their kitchen. It is still owned by their family. Artmaster envelopes are printed by offset in one or two colors. On the reverse is a short biography or description of the stamp subject. Early Artmaster covers are single color engravings.

House of Farnam is the very oldest continuously produced cachet, founded by Dusty Farnam and his wife Vera in Cleveland, Ohio on May 9, 1936. The business was sold to John Halliday of Whittier in the late 1970's. Artmaster assumed production in 1988. These are multi-color engravings and have a rich, distinctive appearance and texture (see below). Early Farnam's are a single color.

Cover Craft Cachets is a line of covers founded in New Jersey by Ben Schwartz in 1964. It has a limited edition version of Farnam since 1987. The line has been produced by Artmaster since 1988. Cachets are made from the same engraving plates as Farnam covers, but feature gray rather than white stock envelopes. Each comes with a stuffer card detailing the number produced for that issue as well as a short description or biography of the stamp subject.



And, What Are Collector's Saying?

I thought it would be interesting to end the article with some current internet commentary by collectors and inheritors seeking FDC market information. I've selected the most revealing, typical and interesting for the reader.

"I've inherited a collection of First Day Covers. There seems to be loads on sale on eBay and many remain unsold." "Any advice selling FDC's?"

Answer: "I doubt if there's anything worth having there, but it would be good if they could go to someone who will appreciate them."

"Any advice on selling FDC's?" Reply: "Like all collectibles, it is only certain ones worth anything. The more research you do the better."

"Any advice selling FDC's?" Reply: "Do what my dad did - make one pile of birds, one pile of trains, and you should be able to sell them better."

"Most items designed for casual collectors are worth very little when the time comes for resale."

"The only way to know is to do a complete items search on each cover one at a time. It's laborious as 99% will be worthless. You can list a few separately. The rest sell as job lots or send them to a local auction house."

Still another: "The auction house is your best bet."

Finally, "My dad used to have Silk covers. He put them together in sets like trains or birds and they sold for a bit of money."

Conclusion: I hope you enjoyed this overview and came away with a comprehensive picture of this aspect of collecting. The state of the FDC market and popularity really mirrors much of the world of philately. Quite likely it was the excessive commercialization that explains the extreme weakness of the FDC market today.

Our Santa Rosa Stamp Club has a growing trove of donated FDC's and more material is undoubtedly on the way to us. Your input on our strategy to either sell or find appreciative takers or both will be appreciated. I hope the article helps the Club in some way to develop an effective plan to dispose of these covers. My fondest wish is that you are open to and newly re-motivated to examine your collection and find creative ways and informed ways to continue collecting FDC's.

Credits & Resources:

Apfelbaum, Inc. What Has Happened to FDC Collecting (2017); The Sprucecrafts, Are FDC's Worthless /What is the Value of FDC's? ; FDC Findyourvalue.com; American First Day Cover Society; The Guardian.com; Northstamp.com; Sapling.com-How To Sell FDC's ; BFDC.Co.UK -Selling and Valuing Your Collection ; Mystic Stamps -various articles ; American FDC Society - A Short Course On First Day Covers; Guide To Stamp Collecting, Janet Klug; Guide To Stamp Collecting, Jiri Novacek; How To Collect Stamps, H.E.Harris; Stamp Collector's Bible, Stephen R. Datz ; This Is Philately, Kenneth A. Wood. A Special Thanks to Doug Iams for his expert input.



Artmaster First Day Cover

Ask Phil

Paul von Gottfried

Dear Phil,

A good friend in my stamp club thinks that the core of collecting communist eastern bloc is the triumvirate of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Which got me wondering about the rest of the eastern bloc countries. What do you think of them as collectibles?

Eastern Bloc lover

Dear Blockhead,

I think the core of collecting the eastern bloc and all communist countries is the 'IA's'. This includes Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Yugoslavia and last but not least Slobovia, home of the Slobs. Upon achieving independence, the Slobs first law made utensils and napkins illegal. Their second law was to ban machine made tp. Their third law was to eliminate pictorial stamps and gum on stamps. Their fourth law was to buy as many Yugo's and make it the official vehicle of their country. Their fifth laws was to eliminate indoor plumbing. Their sixth law was to kick out non-slobs. As it turned out, most had fled in 1991. Of course, they had to import a few who had to pass a sloppy test. Hey, there was a lot of national pride and tradition at stake. Well it worked. No one wants to visit Slobovia and no one collects their stamps after they achieved independence in 1991 1/2. They didn't want to leave the Soviet Bloc so it took them 6 months longer. I understand Putin is still refusing their phone calls.

To sum up, I don't suggest you collect stamps from Slobovia, as rare as they may be, either before or after 1991. Many of the other countries, even Albania once or twice, issued colorful topicals under the umbrella of the Soviet Union. Slobovia never did. They were all brown, for one thing.

With apologies to Hungary, the 'IA's' have it.

Phil A Tellick

SRSC

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 6:45 pm to 9:00 pm at the Finley Community Center, 2060 W. College Road, in Santa Rosa. Membership dues are \$20 per year. Following a discussion of club business matters, the meetings feature a philatelic presentation and a member auction. For further information about the club visit our website at <http://www.santarosastampclub.org/home.html>

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