

The Philatelikid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)
www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org

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Cutting Your Hinges in Half

For over a century hinges have been used by stamp collectors to mount their stamps into their albums. New stamp collectors almost always begin collecting by placing stamps into an album, and many a collector has carefully pasted (glued) stamps into an album, only to learn later that a better way exists. When a new collector learns how to properly hinge a stamp, and how to properly remove a hinged stamp from an album he or she is well on the way to becoming a real stamp collector, not just a person who accumulates stamps.

Most stamp collectors who have been around a while have been asked to look at a “collection” somebody inherited that is stored in cigar boxes, shoe boxes, and a variety of other methods to try to determine if there is any value there. It is difficult/ impossible to tell if there is any hidden treasure there, and most frequently all we can say is that it appears to have some sentimental value, but nothing jumps out at us to say “Take a good look at this.” The benefit of organizing stamps becomes readily apparent, for by organizing the stamps, the collector makes it much easier to observe any valuable stamps.

Today, many stamp collectors eschew the use of hinges – totally. Obviously the collector who wants mint stamps that have never been hinged (NH for short, often identified by two asterisks this way : **) will not want to use hinges on the pristine stamps in the collection, but instead uses hingeless mounts, or has albums that are “hingeless.” Even collectors of used stamps often avoid using hinges on their more valuable stamps because of the danger of creating a thin on the back of the stamp when the hinge is pulled off. However, most beginning collectors must either use hinges to mount their collection, or else be satisfied with just “accumulating” stamps.

Our thrifty stamp-collecting forefathers had to pay 10¢ to purchase a package of 1,000 hinges, which due to inflation now retails for about \$4 per thousand. That today still amounts to less than half a cent per hinge, which is cheaper than just about anything else today. Nevertheless, those thrifty forefathers found a way to make the cost even lower. They would cut their hinges in half – lengthwise – thus creating two hinges out of one. Many older albums have stamps mounted with half-hinges. That worked fairly well, but the half-hinge obviously did not secure

a stamp as well as a full hinge, and it resulted in stamps becoming loose in their albums, falling out, becoming damaged or lost. In the past 50 years the practice of cutting hinges in half has become so rare that I have not seen or heard of anybody practicing this form of thriftiness today. The American Philatelic Society warns people who wish to mount stamps to be sold in their Circuit Sales books that half-hinges are not allowed. Other than that, the entire discussion about half-hinges has disappeared, thankfully. It just is not a good practice, and the thriftiness required during the Depression years no longer makes any sense. I can only imagine the amount of time spent carefully cutting 1,000 hinges in half to stretch a 10¢ package of hinges into 2,000 hinges!

Once a hinge has been used, it cannot be reused, and must be discarded. However, I imagine our thrifty forefathers carefully examined those used hinges to see if they could be reused, or perhaps cut in half and salvage the remaining “good” half which would occur when a hinge was not completely moistened when first used.

Quite a variety of different hingeless mounts have been created and sold to stamp collectors who want to avoid using hinges. Some of those mounts proved to be very bad, and actually would damage the stamps they were supposed to be protecting. For example, some cheap mounts would shrivel with time and thus wrinkle any stamp that they were supposed to be protecting from the “damage” of hinges. A mount that was just a tiny bit too small also could be used, and those mounts would damage the perforations on a stamp. That was a particular problem because the manufacturing and perforation of stamps frequently resulted in stamps of slightly different heights and widths. Some plastic mounts actually emitted gases which would damage the stamps. In humid climates, some mounts – even otherwise fine mounts – would cause stamps to be glued inside them. Choosing a good mount is not as simple as it may seem, and for inexpensive stamps, the mount often costs more than the stamp is worth. In the long run it definitely does not make sense to try to be thrifty and use cheap mounts that will damage your stamps !

A hinge

A mount

A “bag” mount

If you have something relating to stamp collecting that you think might be appropriate for this newsletter, please feel free to send it to Robert W. Martin at the address listed below.

Comments? Write Robert W. Martin, P.O. Box 1809, Kihei, HI 96753 (Try to use a nice stamp on your letter.)

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