

The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

Collect Stamps (The Most Educational Hobby)

www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org

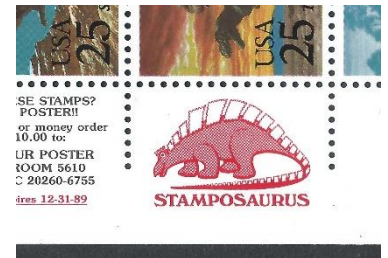
March 1, 2017

Stamp of the Month



In 1989 the USPS issued four stamps featuring prehistoric animals. Included were Tyrannosaurus, Pteranodon, Stegosaurus, and Brontosaurus, four of the most famous dinosaurs. The four stamps were issued se-tenant, meaning they alternated on one pane of stamps. At left is illustrated the left two columns of a pane of these stamps, Scott 2422 through 2455. These animals actually were not all dinosaurs. The Pteranodon, the “flying lizards” were not dinosaurs, but rather Pterosaurs. The four animals featured lived in what is now called North America, but at the time they lived the continent of North America as we now know it did not exist. For example, the western part of North America was separate from the rest by the Western Interior Seaway, a large waterway. The island continent that is now part of western North America is now called Laramidia, a name created by J. David Archibald in 1996.

One animal that did not exist at all was a Stamosaurus. That fictional animal is the red animal that appears midway from the top to the bottom in the selvedge on the left side of the pane of stamps.



Selvedge Collecting

Selvedge is that part of the paper surrounding the stamp that is superfluous to the stamp and often is torn off and thrown away prior to the customer’s placing the stamp on an envelope or package.

In the printing process several panes of stamps are usually printed at the same time on a large sheet of paper. After printing, the sheet has perforations added which facilitate tearing individual stamps from each other. The sheet is then cut into individual panes. The excess paper between the sheets, but outside of the stamps is sometimes trimmed, but there still remains paper that is extra – the selvedge. Depending on how

closely the trimming is done, the selvedge can be just a few millimeters or it can be larger than the stamp itself.

The selvedge sometimes is just plain unprinted paper, but it often contains printed numbers, symbols, letters, guidelines, slogans, advertising, legal information such as copyright, pencil notations, and evidence of packaging such as staple holes.



Enlargement of upper left corner showing a slogan, "Use Correct ZIP Code ®" and also showing a pencil notation "40" which was written by a post office clerk when counting inventory. The number probably refers to the number of panes counted (40) in the shipment received of this stamp.



On the left, this selvedge shows the legal copyright information "© United States Postal Service 1989." On the right, this selvedge contains an advertisement for a dinosaur poster for sale by the USPS.



Some stamp collectors treasure the selvedge, which can turn an inexpensive stamp into a valuable rarity. The most common type of selvedge collecting is to keep the selvedge that contains one or more numbers which the printer uses to identify the particular plate used to print that sheet of stamps. That is called the plate number, and the stamp with a plate number in the adjacent selvedge is called a plate number single, for a single stamp, and when multiple stamps are attached to the selvedge containing the plate number, it is referred to as a plate number block.

On the illustration to the right, the selvedge adjacent to the two lower left stamps shows plate numbers.



When large numbers of stamps are printed it sometimes becomes necessary to have more than one plate used in the printing process. Each plate will have its own distinct number. Plate number collectors often want one example of each different plate number, even though the stamp itself is the same. In some cases, the location of the plate number relative to the pane of stamps varies, so it is possible to have the same plate number but in different locations, such as upper left, upper right, lower left and lower right. Sometimes the plate number is printed in the middle of the pane.

When a plate number is printed in the selvedge of a corner stamp, collectors like to collect the four closest stamps, the “plate block.” When a plate number falls in the middle of a pane, collectors like to collect a block of six stamps.

To complicate matters, plate numbers sometimes go across the selvedge of several stamps. This occurs when multiple colors are involved and there is a plate for each color. For example, the United States 24¢ airmail stamp featuring the Curtiss Jenny (Scott 3) was printed in two colors – blue and red – and thus has in the selvedge a red number and also a blue number for the plates used.

Most stamps are used one at a time, unless the envelope weighs more than one ounce. A used (canceled) stamp with a plate number attached is fairly rare, and a used plate block of four (or more) is even rarer.

When coil stamps and booklet stamps are trimmed, the plate number is normally in the area of the paper that is trimmed away and thus is never seen by the customer who buys the coil or booklet. On some cases, where the trimming was done improperly, an off-center coil or booklet may have a portion of the plate number showing. If enough of the plate number is visible, the plate number can be ascertained. In rare cases the entire number is visible. When that happens, a common stamp worth just pennies can become worth hundreds of dollars.

Selvedge With Mr. ZIP

In 1970 the USPS designed and implemented an improved method of sorting mail. Prior to that time, mail contained in the addressee area the name of the recipient, the street number and street name, and the city, and state. International mail also contained the country. Large cities such as New York and Chicago began using zones to facilitate sorting and delivery. Hence an address might read Mr. Jack Sprat, 1234 Main Street, Chicago 12, Illinois. To improve sorting the USPS assigned a two letter code for each state in the United States and each province of Canada. Certain states such as Minnesota traditionally were abbreviated “Minn” but then became simply MN.

Nebraska was traditionally “Nebr” but became, to the confusion of many, not NB but NE. NB was to be used for the Canadian province of New Brunswick. Those standardized abbreviations did help sorting, but was not adequate.

The USPS assigned a five digit numerical code for geographic areas. Sometimes, a code was sufficient for an entire city. The city of Kihei, Hawaii was assigned 96754, but mail going to Post Office Boxes was assigned 96753. Later the USPS added four more numbers making ZIP codes 9 digits long. (ex.: 96753-1809)

The new code improved the old zone codes used only in large cities, and was termed the Zone Improvement Plan Code, or ZIP code for short.



To promote the use of Zip codes the USPS began using cancellations that said “Use Zip Codes” or similar wording. A ZIP code mascot was designed showing a cartoon character of a postman running to deliver mail. The cartoon character was named Mr. Zip. (The word “postman” was changed officially to “letter carrier” to be gender neutral.)

← Running Mr. ZIP



Standing Mr. ZIP

After the implementation of ZIP codes and Mr. Zip, when sheets of stamps were printed, the USPS began including Mr. Zip in the selvedge. Collecting stamps with attached selvedge showing Mr. Zip became popular.



In addition to plate numbers and Mr. Zip, the USPS began copyrighting postage stamps, and began placing copyright logos in the selvedge.

Many other characters and designs appear in selvedge, including color registers to ensure the colors are aligning properly, and lines to enable better cutting to separate the large sheet into individual panes.

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. It should be written as if the reader knows nothing about your topic.

Visit our website at www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org or www.yummystampcollecting.org

Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids is a 501 C (3) organization. All donations are appreciated and if \$10 or more are provided written receipts.

