

The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

Collect Stamps (The Most Educational Hobby)

www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org

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Stamp of the Month

Been around a while and have seen a few things.

If you have seen a tv commercial lately for Farmers Insurance, you probably have seen their spokesman tell us that they have been around a while and seen a few things. This year marks my 60th year collecting stamps and



covers, so I have been around a while, and seen a few things. One thing that I am NOT very familiar with is the grading of stamps. The stamp of the month this month is a very common US stamp that would normally sell at a discount from face value. But this particular stamp has a market value of about \$55.00 according to SMQ. Why is it “encased” in durable plastic? What is that sticker with a barcode, and where can the barcode be checked? Who collects stamps this way, and how are they collected? Are they “mounted?” If so, how? And what is SMQ? How does SMQ arrive at their suggested retail prices? More about this next month.

Grading of stamps began about 12 years ago by two highly respected companies in the philatelic world. They are PF (Philatelic Foundation) and PSE (Professional Stamp Experts.) More will be written about PSE and APS and other expertizing services in our next issue of *The Philatelikid*.

If you try to find Philatelic Foundation on the internet, you will quickly see that www.philatelicfoundation.com is an “expired” website (domain name has expired). After a little research, you will find that the correct website is www.philatelicfoundation.org. (not .com). At the .org website you will learn all about The Philatelic Foundation, but for the purposes of brevity, let me just say that it is a very prestigious business that maintains the highest standards possible, and that it has been around since 1945.

Recently I was very fortunate to have Mr. David Petruzelli at PF spend 25 minutes with me informing me about the many facets of expertizing stamps and assigning grading. He explained to me that grading is actually part of the expertizing process, and that not all stamps that are expertized get assigned a grade.

In order to qualify for a grade, the stamp must meet 3 requirements (in addition to being genuine, of course.) they are (1) The stamp has to be “sound” and if it is a perforated stamp, all the perforations must be there. In other words, a stamp that has a “pulled perf” – a perforation that is torn out of the stamp – will not qualify for

grading, no matter how well centered. (2) The stamp should have “good color.” Admittedly, this is a subjective decision, but I believe we can trust these expertizers to know what good color is, and what a faded or chemically altered stamp is. And (3) the stamp must be a “good impression.” Again, this is a subjective matter, and we also can rest assured that these people know what is and is not a good impression. Naturally, some stamp collectors think their stamp has a good impression, and/or good color, but the experts disagree. Such is the nature of life, and we all have different opinions, but this is what the EXPERTS think.

Once a stamp meets the above minimum requirements, it is eligible for grading, which PF does for no additional charge. (There is, of course, a charge for the expertizing.) Mr. Petruzelli pointed out to me an important fact: **Grading is scientific.** In other words, it is a measurement, and can be verified. The PF defines grading this way (from the PF website):

“It is a numerical grade which is assigned to a stamp based on its condition. The scale ranges from a minimum of 70 to a maximum grade of 100. Often times, grading can add significant value to a stamp dependent on factors including the market for that specific stamp and how many examples share the same grade. The numerical grade is heavily dependent on the centering of the stamp. The presence of faults and their severity will reduce the grade given to a stamp.”

Although the above states a “minimum of 70” the PF website delineates grades including 10 (Poor), 20 (Fair), 30 (Good), 40 (Good-Very Good), 50 (Very Good), 60 (Very Good-Fine), 70 (Fine), 75 (Fine-Very Fine), 80 (Very Fine), 85 (Very Fine – Extremely Fine), 90 (Extremely Fine), 95 (Extremely Fine - Superb), 98 (Superb), 100 (Superb Gem.)

It should be noted that PF does not place market values. That is done by SMQ, which is an abbreviation for *Stamp Market Quarterly*. To find the market value for a stamp, once it is graded, simply go to www.gradingmatters.com and enter the Scott catalogue number. Up will pop market prices for various grades of the same stamp. For example, the stamp illustrated with this article is Scott # 1064, which at the time this article is written (April, 2017) has an SMQ value in Grade 98 of \$55. If this exact stamp were graded 95, the SMQ market value would be only \$25, and if the Grade were only 90, the SMQ value drops to \$15, and with a Grade of 85, the WMQ value is \$10. For a collector who is not so choosy, this same stamp can be obtained at a grade less than 85 for about 3¢ (face value) if you are willing to purchase an entire sheet. With a little effort, you probably could even purchase an entire sheet of 50 of these 3¢ stamps, mint, never hinged, for less than face value. There is money to be made by a discerning person who purchases a sheet of 50 stamps and finds even one that grades 98 or better! However, I personally cannot tell with my naked eye the difference between a stamp that grades 90 and one that grades 100. (Some experienced dealers claim they can tell just by looking!)

If you want even more details, they are provided at the PF website at www.philatelicfoundation.org/expertizing-process/grading/

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, P.O. Box 1809, Kihei, Hawaii 96753-1809. It should be written as if the reader knows nothing about your topic, so beginners can understand it.

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. You also can donate via PayPal on our website.

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