Mystic's Guide to Stamp Collecting

The Quick-Start Guide to the Greatest Hobby of All Time!



- How to start or build your stamp collection
- Identify your stamps
- Nine major types of U.S. stamps explained
- Stamp glossary
- Stamp-collecting tools
- How to organize and care for your collection



A Word from Lifelong Collector and Retired Mystic President Don Sundman





Don Sundman
Mystic Stamp Company

The Sundman boys learning the fun of stamp collecting with dad, Maynard.

Hi, I'm Don Sundman, retired president of Mystic Stamp Company and lifelong collector. When I was a kid, my dad showed me how meaningful and important stamps are... the rest is history! Stamp collecting opened up a whole new world for me and became my lifelong passion. I love looking at my stamp albums. It's like visiting a miniature art *and* history museum at home. Stamp collecting has made me a better person and kept my life interesting and exciting. I'm never bored because there's always more to learn!

One of my favorite things is to share the joy of stamp collecting with others like me. That's why I made this booklet! So sit back, relax, and let me take you on an introductory tour of the wonderful world of stamp collecting.

"These are my two favorite stamps I've ever owned – the 1¢ Z Grill and Inverted Jenny Plate Block. They just so happen to be some of the world's rarest, too! I feel lucky to have been part of their histories." – Don



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How to Get Started

We know starting in this hobby can be intimidating! **At Mystic, our mission is to demystify and help you love stamp collecting.** A great first step to collecting is visiting MysticStamp.com. You'll see over 100,000 stamps in a range of formats, starting as low as 35¢! You can shop by *Scott Catalogue* number, country, year, topic, plus all the supplies you need to keep your collection safe and organized. (Note: Most stamp dealers, collectors, and even the US Postal Service use Scott Catalogue numbers to identify US stamps.)

Then, order *Mystic's U.S. Stamp Catalog*. Our FREE catalog showcases over 6,000 different US stamps issued from 1847 to present, in mint or used condition – that's nearly every stamp America has ever made! It's over 160 pages and full of stamp stories, tips, and supplies to make collecting more fun. Visit MysticStamp.com to get your FREE copy today.

But, by far the most popular way to get started is to join a club...

1.5 Million Club Customers Served Since 2007!

Joining a club is by far our most popular way to collect.

And there's no wonder why with hundreds of club options available: Airmail, Space, Old West, Music — the list of topics is long & growing. If you have a passion for a subject, odds are we have a club, or clubs, for you! And joining is easy...

- **Buy your first shipment, and you're in!** We send your introductory shipment at a special low price and FREE shipping. Then every few weeks, we'll send you a new set to consider.
- **You're in control.** You get 21 days to review each shipment. Keep and pay for the ones you love, return any you don't.
- **Satisfaction guaranteed!** Cancel your membership anytime, there's no obligation & no hassle
- **Get over $30 in FREE gifts with your third shipment.** To help you care for and enjoy your new collection, we'll send you an illustrated album plus pre-cut archival-quality mounts. Imagine the satisfaction you'll get filling it up!



Statehood Stamp & Coin Club

This club lets you build a collection of US stamps and State Quarters commemorating the 50 states. It's a fun and interesting way to track the history of the diverse states that make up our great nation.

In this introductory offer you'll get 50 used US stamps showcasing people and events important to each state for just **$2 with FREE Shipping**. ***That's more than 85% off retail***! Future shipment prices will vary depending on the scarcity and condition of stamps included, but most are $20-$40.

If you want stamps and coins representing the history of America's 50 states, we know you're going to feel right at home as a member of our Heritage Statehood Club: Limit one at this low price. Order online today at **MysticAd.com/SH560**.

Get matched with your club today!
Call 1-866-660-7147 or go to **MysticStamp.com/clubs**

More Fun Clubs to Join!



The Heritage U.S. Stamp Collection

This is your chance to get 100 mint US postage stamps. Older US stamps are getting more and more difficult to find. That's why this convenient special offer is such a treat for you. Every stamp has a story to tell. And these stamps tell so much about America. Get these 100 mint stamps in your special introductory offer for just **$7.95 with FREE Shipping.** Limit one at this price. Order online today at **MysticAd.com/OC91F.**

1847-99 U.S. Stamp Club

Now's your chance to own seven classic US postage stamps. As you'd expect with stamps that have passed through the postal system, each carries one or two minor imperfections. These small flaws don't detract from their beauty or collectability – but they do let me offer you a nice discount. Each one is a beautiful example of the engraver's art, representing over 115 years of US postal history – making them wonderful additions to your collection. Get these seven used classic stamps in your first shipment for just **$9.95 with FREE Shipping, *more than 50% off retail.*** Limit one at this low price. Order online today at **MysticAd.com/AI161.**





U.S. Airmail Stamp Club

These stamps made history when they were first launched in 1918, ushering in an era of daring pilots in experimental aircraft. This introductory offer is your chance to own an official reproduction of America's greatest error stamp: the 2013 Inverted Jenny, printed with the original 1918 plates. You'll also receive special collector's information and more airmail stamps on approval. Just **$4.95 with FREE Shipping!** Limit one at this low price.
Order online today at **MysticAd.com/VZ680.**



Imperforate U.S. Stamp Club

Start a collection of scarce, modern imperforates with these scarce Pony Car stamps. They were issued in very limited numbers and weren't sold in post offices. You'll also receive special collector's information and other hard-to-find imperforates on approval. Just **$9.95 with FREE Shipping.** Limit one at this low price. Order online today at **MysticAd.com/PU150.**

Want to learn more about stamps and collecting?
***Dive into our Learning Center at* MysticStamp.com.**



Pearl Harbor Coin Club

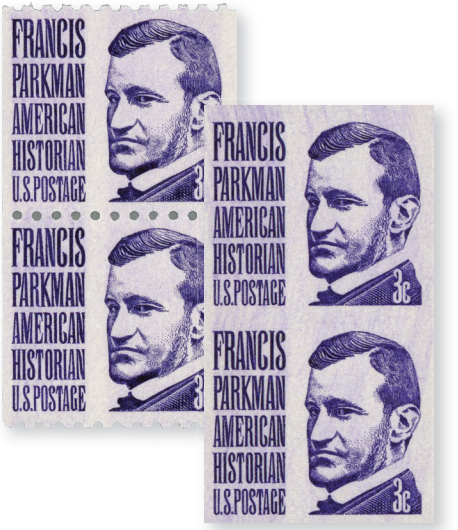
Through this special offer you can own a US half dollar enhanced with an image from the attack on Pearl Harbor. Later you can choose to build a collection of US half dollar coins picturing other moments from the attack on Pearl Harbor. Reminders of the "day which will live in infamy," and the many Americans who lost their lives on December 7, 1941. These coins represent the historic significance of the Japanese surprise attack that brought the United States into World War II. They pay tribute to the American soldiers and citizens who fought bravely that day to push back the attackers and save as many lives as they could.

This introductory offer is only **$5 – a *discount of over 50% off our regular price*.** Limit one at this low price. Order online today at **MysticAd.com/VK630.**

U.S. Error Stamp Club

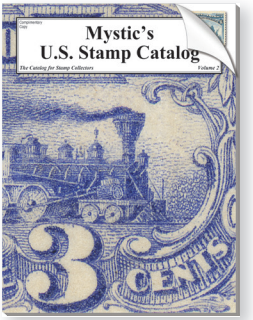
Own a scarce and desirable US error stamp from the Prominent Americans Series with this introductory offer. They're reminders of how intricate the process can be, and what happens when something goes wrong — inverted designs, missing colors, and more. We'll also send the regular-issue stamps you can display side by side for comparison. These are fun pieces of philatelic history you'll enjoy collecting.

You'll start with an imperf coil pair for just **$14.95 with FREE Shipping, *that's 50% off retail.*** Limit one at this low price. Order online today at **MysticAd.com/PI120.**



But, we have more great resources for collecting...

Full-Color Mystic Publications, Get Them for Free!



Mystic's U.S. Stamp Catalog: Mystic produces a full-color catalog of United States postage stamps each year. Over 6,000 stamps are illustrated, many enlarged to show detail so you'll know exactly what you're ordering. It's a great way to see rare stamps you may never have seen before. Our big catalog is filled with all kinds of fascinating behind-the-scenes stamp stories and helpful collecting tips.

Every stamp sold in *Mystic's U.S. Stamp Catalog* is free of flaws according to Mystic's strict grading standards. Stamps issued before 1941 will have good or better centering for the issue and most will be hinged. After 1941, stamps will have fine or better centering for the issue and most mint stamps won't be hinged.

Mystic's U.S. Stamp Catalog is widely considered America's best. Late stamp expert Janet Klug said:

"*It is... fun... peppered with stories, trivia, fascinating facts, and loads of colored pictures of mouth-watering stamps.*"



Mystic's Stamp Showcase: Our Showcase is the perfect tool for helping you build your dream collection. It's full of quality US stamps, worldwide stamp offers, mint sets, and even stamps with small imperfections offered at big discounts. You'll find just the right stamps for your collection in *Mystic's Stamp Showcase.* (And it's so much fun to read!) Issued every other month.

Mystic's Rewards: Use your Mystic Rewards Points to get **FREE stamps**! You get Rewards Points for every dollar you spend with Mystic. Each quarter, we issue an updated Rewards catalog, filled with thousands of stamps, supplies, covers, and coins. Your most current Rewards Points balance is printed on the back, so you know exactly how many points you have to spend. Plus, there are always dozens of items discounted by 50% or more, making this a great way to stretch your hobby dollars (and points) even further!



See back cover for more about Mystic's Rewards Points.

Or Collect at MysticStamp.com

MysticStamp.com is better and easier to use than ever. It's full of insider information and collecting tips that are sure to make your hobby time more fun. You can enjoy all kinds of interesting and helpful articles on collecting, watch videos of Mystic's Don Sundman teaching about rare stamps and favorite collecting topics, or attend Maynard Sundman Lectures from the National Postal Museum without traveling to Washington, DC.

Shop Anytime at MysticStamp.com

It's easier to find the stamps and supplies you're looking for with our improved search and navigation features. Shop 24 hours a day, seven days a week from your computer or mobile device. US stamps are available in more formats and conditions on the website than we can list in our catalogs. Plus, you can search for worldwide stamps or by topic, making it a breeze to start or expand a specialty collection.

When you're done shopping, the checkout process is quick, easy and secure. Most orders are shipped within two working days!

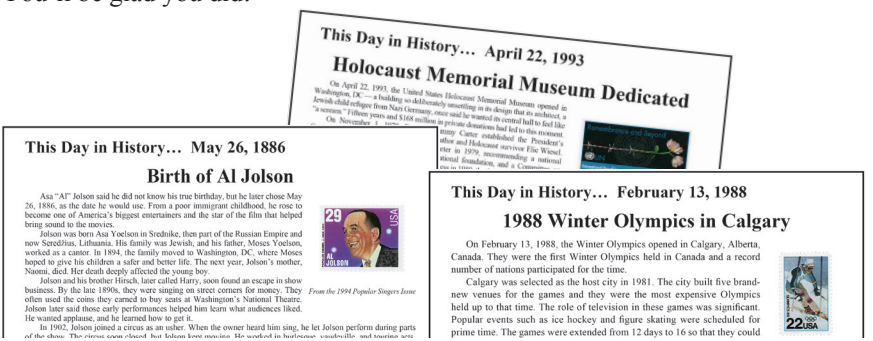
Don't Miss Our Mystic Stamp Learning Hub

The educational section of our site is packed with information about collecting, fun stamp stories and frequently asked questions about stamps and Mystic. We're improving it all the time, so check it out. Info.MysticStamp.com

For a Great Morning Read: Sign up for "This Day in History" Emails

This Day in History is one of the most popular features on our website. Every day, we share neat events from America's past linked to stamps. You can search our large database of articles by date or topic. Plus you can browse other interesting articles and stories related to that day's event.

To get these daily articles sent straight to your inbox, go to Info.MysticStamp.com/Sign-up and sign up for "This Day in History" emails. You'll be glad you did!


This Day in History… April 22, 1993

Holocaust Memorial Museum Dedicated

On April 22, 1993, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in Washington, DC — a building so deliberately unsettling in its design that its architect, a Jewish child refugee from Nazi Germany, once said he wanted its central hall to feel like "a sermon." Fifteen years and $168 million in private donations had led to this moment. Jimmy Carter established the President's other and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, ster in 1979, recommending a national ational foundation, and a Commission

This Day in History… May 26, 1886

Birth of Al Jolson

Asa "Al" Jolson said he did not know his true birthday, but he later chose May 26, 1886, as the date he would use. From a poor immigrant childhood, he rose to become one of America's biggest entertainers and the star of the film that helped bring sound to the movies.

Jolson was born Asa Yoelson in Srednike, then part of the Russian Empire and now Seredžius, Lithuania. His family was Jewish, and his father, Moses Yoelson, worked as a cantor. In 1894, the family moved to Washington, DC, where Moses hoped to give his children a safer and better life. The next year, Jolson's mother, Naomi, died. Her death deeply affected the young boy.

Jolson and his brother Hirsch, later called Harry, soon found an escape in show business. By the late 1890s, they were singing on street corners for money. They often used the coins they earned to buy seats at Washington's National Theatre. Jolson later said those early performances helped him learn what audiences liked. He wanted applause, and he learned how to get it.

In 1902, Jolson joined a circus as an usher. When the owner heard him sing, he let Jolson perform during parts of the show. The circus soon closed, but Jolson kept moving. He worked in burlesque, vaudeville, and touring acts

From the 1994 Popular Singers Issue

This Day in History… February 13, 1988

1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary

On February 13, 1988, the Winter Olympics opened in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. They were the first Winter Olympics held in Canada and a record number of nations participated for the time.

Calgary was selected as the host city in 1981. The city built five brand-new venues for the games and they were the most expensive Olympics held up to that time. The role of television in these games was significant. Popular events such as ice hockey and figure skating were scheduled for prime time. The games were extended from 12 days to 16 so that they could

Nine Major Categories of U.S. Stamps

Definitive



The stamp known as the "workhorse" of the postal system is the definitive, or regular-issue stamp. Paying postage on everyday mail, it's issued in a wide variety of denominations. A single issue is used for long periods of time. Definitives are interesting to collect. Since their extended use means they are reprinted from time to time, there can be many differences among the stamps, which at first glance appear the same. You may find differences in design due to variations in printing plates, methods or companies, color, margin dates, watermarks (on older US stamps), perforations, and type of gum (self-adhesive or water-activated).

Commemorative



In 1893, a new type of stamp was introduced. The commemorative is a stamp issued to honor an important person, event, or anniversary. It's printed in smaller quantities than definitives, and is sold for a limited time, usually a few months. Unsold stamps are generally destroyed. The first US commemorative stamps were issued to commemorate the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The 16-stamp series depicted various stages of Columbus's voyages to the New World. Today these stamps are highly valued by collectors. Commemoratives make America's history come alive.

Semipostal



Semipostals are postage stamps with an additional charge (called a surcharge) intended to raise money for a specific cause. In 1997, the Postal Service issued the first US semipostal stamp. It paid the 32¢ postage rate and an extra 8¢ from its sale went to help fund breast cancer research. In 2002, the Heroes of 9/11 Semipostal raised funds for the families of emergency personnel killed or disabled in the September 11, 2001, attacks on America.

Scott numbers for Semipostals begin with the letter "B."

Airmail



In 1918, airmail service was started in the US and there was a need for special stamps to pre-pay airmail postal rates. The first Airmail stamp was the 24¢ Curtiss Jenny. US mail is routinely carried by air now. Because of that, the US Postal Service stopped issuing airmail stamps in 2012. Airmail stamps are listed with Scott numbers beginning with "C."

From 1934-36, the Post Office Department issued Airmail Special Delivery stamps. These were to provide air postage and a fee for special delivery. There were only two such stamps issued: Scott numbers CE1 & CE2.

Postage Due



The first Postage Due stamp was issued in 1879. Its use indicated an amount due to the post office when not enough postage was put on a piece of mail. Postage Due stamps have large numerals indicating the amount of postage owed. Use of Postage Due stamps was discontinued in 1986. Postage Due stamps have Scott numbers beginning with "J."

Special Delivery



In 1885, a new postal service was begun – special delivery. The Special Delivery stamp indicated that an extra fee had been charged for immediate delivery to a person's address once the mail was delivered to the nearest post office. Special Delivery stamps are designated by Scott numbers beginning with "E."

Parcel Post



In 1912, stamps were introduced to pay postage on parcels. There were twelve Parcel Post stamps issued, all with different denominations and designs, but with the same format and color. Postal workers had trouble telling the difference between the 1¢ and $1 stamps. By 1913, parcel post charges could be paid for with any stamp, and Parcel Post stamps became obsolete. Scott numbers for Parcel Post stamps begin with "Q."

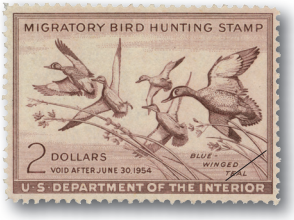
Also issued in 1912 were the **Parcel Post Postage Due** stamps. They are Scott number "JQ" and show that there is an amount to be collected from the addressee.

Official



The term "official" refers to a stamp used only by a department of the government. In 1873, the US issued Official stamps for the Executive Branch and the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Justice, Navy, Post Office, Treasury, and War. These Official stamps were in use for seven years. Now there is just one type of Official stamp used by all branches of government. Last issued in 2009, Officials have Scott numbers beginning with "O."

Revenue



The final major type of US stamp is the Revenue stamp. These stamps show the collection of tax or payment of a fee. The most popular Revenues are probably the migratory bird hunting stamps, or "Duck stamps," as they are commonly called. Revenue stamps are given Scott numbers beginning with an "R."

How to Identify Your U.S. Stamps

The chief reward of collecting stamps is discovering the fun and thrill of acquiring the stamps you love best! Knowing the basics of identification is key. Two stamps can look the same on the surface but be different issues with widely varying values.

Measuring Perforations



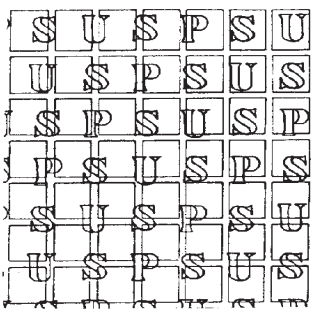
You may find you have some older US stamps that look exactly alike. Measuring perforations can help you identify your stamps. A perforation gauge (shown here) measures the number of perforations in the space of 2 centimeters.

Always measure the horizontal (top or bottom) perforations of your stamps first, then the vertical (opposite sides). Make sure the circles on your perforation gauge fit perfectly into your stamp's perforations. If two "look-alike" stamps have the same design, color, and perforation measurement, you may also need to check for a watermark.

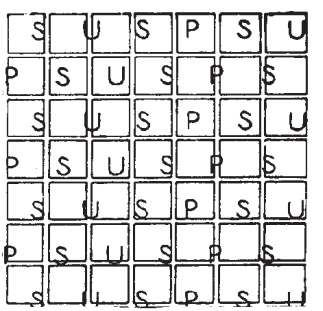
Watermarks

Sometimes the only difference between stamps that look alike is their watermark. Watermarks are letters or patterns impressed into the paper used to produce certain stamps. Modern US stamps don't have watermarks, but many older ones do, in the shape of a single line or double line U, S, or P. See illustrations below.

Watermarks were introduced as a way to deter counterfeiting. To see if your stamp has a watermark, place it face down in a watermark tray, and pour enough watermark fluid over it to cover completely. (Never use water.) How well the watermark shows varies with each stamp. Let your stamp dry completely before removing it from the tray. US watermarks are always letters like those shown below. (Many foreign stamps have watermarks in the shape of a crown or other symbol alone or in addition to letters.) See page 16 for information on watermarking tools.



Double Line Watermark across a sheet



Single Line Watermark across a sheet



Actual Size Double Line Watermark

Used and Mint Stamps

A used stamp has a cancellation. Usually the gum is missing and the stamp has been through the mail. Used as well as mint stamps can be in great condition.

Mint stamps haven't been used for postage and have no cancellation. They are gummed, except very old mint US stamps and those issued without gum. They may have a hinge mark if the stamp was mounted in a stamp album. (Hinges are one way to attach stamps to an album page.)

Sheets, Coils, and Booklet Stamps (Water activated or "lick and stick")

Some modern stamp designs look the same, but have been issued for different purposes. The only difference when you look at them may be the number of sides with perforations.

Sheet stamps have perforations on all four sides.

Coil stamps are issued in long strips for use in vending machines. They have straight edges on opposite sides and perforations on the other two sides.

Booklet stamps come from a small pane or block of stamps – part of a booklet sold at post offices or in vending machines. These stamps can have straight edges on one, two, or three sides. Today, they may even have four!



2881
sheet



2889
coil



2883



2884

booklet stamps

Self-Adhesive Stamps

Self-adhesive stamps are issued on a special backing paper. Once peeled off the backing, the adhesive allows the stamps to be affixed without being moistened. When placing mint self-adhesive stamps in your album, carefully trim the backing paper close to the stamp. **Don't remove it!**



2886
self-adhesive
booklet stamp

Most US stamps issued today are self-adhesive. They generally have wavy, "serpentine" perforations or "saw-tooth," triangular perforations. In fact, self-adhesive stamps don't always "follow the rules" of water-activated stamps. For example, a self-adhesive booklet stamp may have perforations on all sides or no perforations at all!

For more information on self-adhesive stamps, visit our website at MysticStamp.com

Worldwide Stamps Bring World History & Geography to Life

Collecting foreign stamps offers you a great way to learn about our world – effortlessly and from the comfort of your easy chair. Foreign stamps provide an insider's view of each nation's history, culture, people, and events.



Foreign stamps may be purchased individually, in packets, or in year sets. Prices vary, but many desirable stamps are also very affordable.

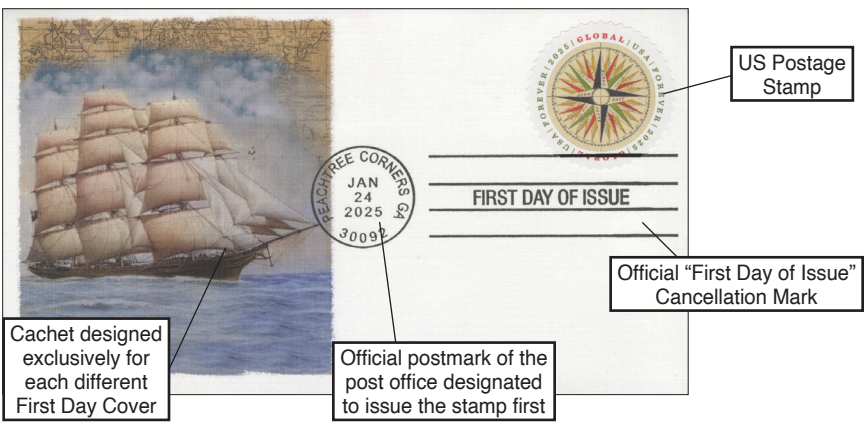
A number of nations issue stamps featuring pop culture, celebrities, and other topicals that are fun to collect.

Collections devoted to countries that no longer exist are popular. Or you may choose to focus on a specific region, era, or almost any topic that interests you. The possibilities are endless!

Why You Should Collect First Day Covers...

A First Day Cover is a special collectible created when a newly issued stamp is affixed to an envelope featuring a decorative "cachet" related to the stamp's topic. The key element: the cover must receive an Official First Day of Issue cancellation from a designated post office — making each cover's combination of design, stamp, and date unique and unrepeatable.

First Day Covers can be purchased from dealers, or collectors can design their own. Mystic's Fleetwood First Day Covers include the stamp's history printed on the reverse — a great way to deepen your enjoyment of the hobby.

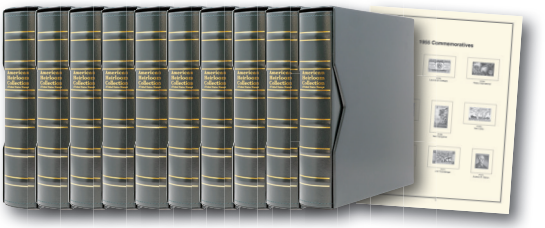


Organize Your Stamps and Choose an Album

Most collectors enjoy organizing their stamps in an album for protection and easy viewing. You can organize your stamps any way you want, but many collectors organize by country (US, Spain), region (Europe, Asia), or topic (animals, space). And there are Albums created for these types of collections.

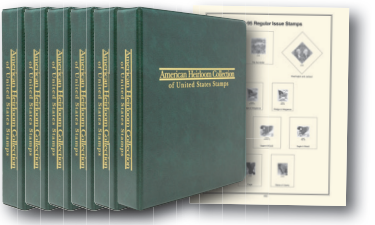
Most collectors of US stamps use an illustrated album to make collecting easier. If you collect worldwide stamps, you might want to use an unillustrated album as there are no worldwide albums illustrating all stamps issued. It also lets you organize your collection just the way you want.

Mystic's Hingeless American Heirloom Album



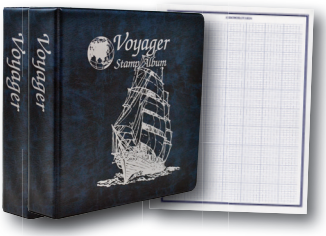
- Crystal-clear protective mounts are affixed to extra-heavy stock paper.
- Each stamp in the album is illustrated and identified by its *Scott Catalogue* number.
- Discover interesting stories about the stamps.
- Binders have expertly hand-stitched bookbinding and "debossed" (recessed) gold lettering.
- Includes matching premium slipcases for added protection.

Mystic's American Heirloom Album



- Three-ring design allows the pages to lie completely flat for easier mounting, viewing, or adding supplement pages.
- Scott number identifier for each stamp for hassle-free organizing.
- Stories behind the stamps make collecting even more fun.
- Spaces for almost every stamp issued that year, including definitives, commemoratives, Airmails, and Semipostals – a great way to keep track of stamps you still need for your collection.

Mystic's Worldwide Voyager Collection Binder



- Three-ring design allows the pages to lie completely flat for easier mounting, viewing, or adding supplement pages.
- Grid design on pages lets you mount your stamps quickly and neatly in any arrangement.
- Includes 309 country names printed at top of pages.

For more binder and album choices, visit MysticStamp.com/albums/

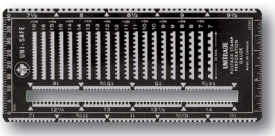
Basic Tools of the Stamp Collector



Handling stamps with your fingers is risky business. Each time you hold a stamp between your fingers you're subjecting it to oils and dirt, plus the possibility of accidental folding or creasing. For that reason, you should own an affordable pair of **tongs.** There are many types to choose from, but generally beginners are better off with a short, rounded-tip model. It's important to know that regular tweezers should not be used, as the sharp, angled tips could damage your stamps.



Hinges are an affordable way to hold stamps in place on album pages. Pre-folded stamp hinges are easy to use, inexpensive, and suitable for many postally used stamps. For mint and more expensive stamps, collectors often prefer stamp **mounts**. (See pages 18-19 for more information on stamp hinges and mounts.)



A really inexpensive but important tool is the **perforation gauge.** This measures the number of "perfs" per two centimeters on any stamp. With some look-alike stamps, this is the only way to tell them apart. For more information on perforations, see page 12.



It doesn't take long to realize that a tiny variation in design can mean the difference between a common stamp and a rare one. For this reason, you'll want to own a **magnifying glass.** To use a hand-held glass, hold it between your thumb and forefinger, resting two fingers on a hard surface. This lets you freely move the glass, but keeps it steady at the proper level for looking at the stamp. Keep the glass at an even height so it's in focus, and look through the glass with both eyes. Do not squint or close one eye.

If you collect older issues, you may want to check for watermarks on your stamps. You'll need a small **watermark tray** and a bottle of **watermark fluid**. Place your stamp face down in the tray, and pour just enough fluid over it to cover. The watermark then shows up as a dark design on the stamp back. Never use water on a gummed stamp to detect a watermark as that will remove its gum! See page 12 for more information on watermarks.

This is just a partial list of the supplies you might need. Find these and more supplies at MysticStamp.com.

How to Soak Your Water-Activated Stamps

The following steps will tell you how to safely soak your water-activated ("lick and stick") stamps when they're attached to a piece of paper or stuck together.



A water-activated stamp "on paper", before being soaked.

1. Place your stamps face-down in a clean container with 2-4 inches of cool water. **(Use cold for stamps cancelled with red or heavy black ink, and those attached to bright/dark paper. These colors can run, so be sure to soak them separately and remove from the water promptly.)**
2. Gently press the stamps into the water until the paper is soaked through. You may soak up to 50 stamps at the same time, just be sure to leave a little space between them.
3. Let the stamps soak for at least 10-15 minutes. When you check them at the ten-minute mark, they should be starting to float off the paper. Some will sink to the bottom.
4. Make sure all the gum has soaked off. Remove the stamps promptly with tongs or by running your fingers underneath them in net fashion. Leaving them in the water too long may weaken their paper. (However, some may need to soak a little longer, so avoid forcing them.)
5. Check both sides of all paper before discarding to make sure no stamps are stuck to it.
6. Place the stamps face-down in rows on clean paper (blotter, wax paper, paper towels, white construction paper) or in a stamp-drying book. Be careful not to overlap them as that may cause them to stick together permanently. Leave them undisturbed for several hours or overnight to make sure they're completely dry.
7. You may stack layers of paper and stamps. Placing a heavy object like a book on top of the stack will help keep them from curling. This makes drying time much longer, but your stamps will lie flatter and be easier to handle.
8. When this batch of stamps is done, start over with a fresh container of water for the next.
9. To remove paper from a sheet, or any attached stamps you want to keep intact, the entire group must be soaked. Water-activated stamps will remain attached after soaking.

We strongly recommend trimming the backing paper from self-adhesive stamps. Use a pair of sharp scissors and carefully cut around the stamp, leaving a margin of one-sixteenth to an eighth of an inch beyond the perforations. You will be much happier if you do this. Trust us, we speak from experience!

To find out if your stamp is self-adhesive, check the perforations. Self-adhesives are die-cut, so they're smooth, sometimes "wavy" (serpentine) or "saw-toothed" (triangular). They will always be on paper, either original backing paper (mint stamps) or piece of envelope that went through the mail (used).

Mounts for these stamps on backing paper are a little larger than those for water-activated stamps of the same size. For help finding the right mount size for your stamp, go to **MysticStamp.com**. Type the Scott number into the search bar at the top and click on your stamp. Under the list of available conditions, you'll see a button that says "Mounts." It's as easy as that.

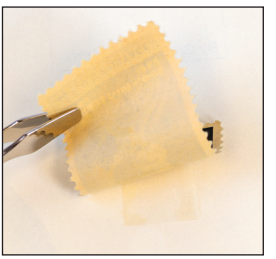
How to Use Hinges and Mounts

Once you've chosen an album, you'll need hinges or mounts to hold your stamps in place. Pre-folded stamp hinges are small, transparent pieces of gummed paper — the short flap attaches to the stamp and the long flap to the album page. They hold your stamps securely while allowing you to lift them to inspect both the front and back, with minimal damage to the original adhesive.

If you collect mint stamps, you may want to use mounts instead. Mounts have a black or clear background with a clear front and hold your stamp in a sleeve, protecting the gum completely. Many collectors use hinges for used stamps and mounts for mint. Find more information plus how-to videos on **MysticStamp.com**.

Hinging Your Stamps

Before you start: Make sure your hinges are fresh. Old or dried-out hinges may need too much moisture to activate, which risks soaking through to the front of your stamp.

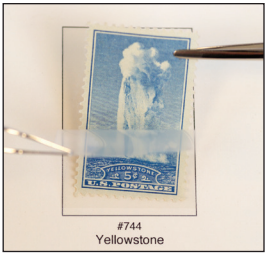


1. **Prepare the hinge**
   Hold the hinge with the short flap on top and the fold facing you. Lightly moisten the short flap — just enough to activate the adhesive. Avoid moistening the fold itself, as a wet fold makes the hinge hard to handle and can cause tearing.
2. **Attach the hinge to your stamp**
   Press the moistened short flap onto the back of your stamp near the top edge, centered left to right. Press gently but firmly and allow a moment to set.
3. **Attach the stamp to the page**
   Lightly moisten the long flap, again avoiding the fold. Position your stamp on the album page, then press the long flap down firmly and hold for a few seconds.
4. **Let it dry**
   Before turning the page, let the hinge dry completely — at least 4 hours. Turning the page too soon can cause the hinge to stick to the facing page or the stamp to shift. If you need to remove a hinge, wait until it's fully dry as well; pulling a damp hinge risks tearing the stamp or the album page.

A note on hinging mint stamps

If you're using a hinge on a mint stamp, reverse steps 2 and 3: moisten the long flap first and press it to the page, then attach the stamp. This way the page absorbs most of the moisture rather than the stamp's gum.

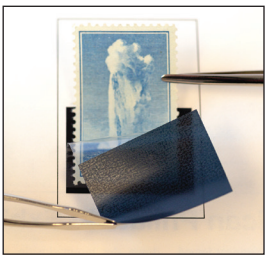
Using Clear Drop-End Mounts



1. Identify the dull side of the mount — that is the back. The seam where the two edges of plastic meet should sit at the bottom, with the open end at the top.
2. Using your stamp tongs, slide the stamp face-up into the open end to confirm it is the right size. It should fit comfortably with a small, even border of the mount showing around all four sides. If the fit is off, try a different size.

3. Slide the stamp back out and set it face-up on a clean, flat surface while you work.
4. Lightly moisten the entire dull back side of the empty mount — a barely damp fingertip works well. *Use as little moisture as possible; excess water can transfer to your stamp and cause wrinkling or staining.*
5. Press the mount firmly onto your album page in the correct position and hold for several seconds. Leave it for 5 to 10 minutes until completely dry.
6. Once dry, use your tongs to angle the stamp slightly and guide it into the open end, sliding it down until it sits flat and centered inside the mount.
7. Confirm the stamp is straight and not peeking out of the top. If needed, use your tongs to gently adjust it into position.

Using Black Split-Back Mounts



1. Hold the mount with both hands and gently flex it lengthwise — the two halves will separate slightly, creating an opening along the middle.
2. Using your stamp tongs, slide the stamp face-up into the opening and push it gently toward the bottom until it is centered. Release the mount and it will close snugly around the stamp.
3. Check that the stamp is straight and fully inside, with none of its edges sticking out. If it needs adjusting, simply flex the mount open again and reposition it.
4. Slide the stamp back out and set it face-up on a clean, flat surface while you mount the empty sleeve to your album page.
5. Turn the mount over so the black back faces up. Lightly moisten the top strip only — a barely damp fingertip works perfectly. Less is more here; too much moisture can seep into the mount and damage your stamp.
6. Press the mount firmly onto your album page in the correct position and hold for several seconds. Then leave it alone for 5 to 10 minutes until it is completely dry.
7. Once dry, use your tongs to slide the stamp back into the mount from the bottom opening. It should sit flat and centered behind the clear front.

Remove Selvage for a Better Fit

Selvage is a paper border around the outside of a sheet or pane of stamps. It can result in a narrow strip on a single stamp as pictured, or a large, illustrated margin on a sheetlet. You may want to remove selvage on a single stamp for easier mounting.



To Remove:

1. Work at a table, not in your lap.
2. Fold selvage toward printed side of stamp, then back toward gummed side back and forth several times until paper becomes weak. Amount of folding necessary varies. After 1960, stamp paper is stronger than that of older stamps, requiring more folding (for self-adhesives, fold to back only).
3. Hold stamp firmly against table gum-side down and carefully pull on selvage to separate.

How to Choose Mounts

Mounts are sold according to size in millimeters. The first number is the width of the mount, the second number is the height. Example: A 45 x 30 mount measures 45 mm wide by 30 mm high.

The most common-sized US stamps are pictured here along with their mounts. To find the mount you need, place your water- activated stamp over the illustration so that it fits exactly.



Horizontal Commemoratives
***(45 x 30 mm)* – MM501**



Vertical Commemoratives
(30 x 45 mm)
MM502



Vertical Definitives
***(27 x 30 mm)* – MM503**



Horizontal Definitives
(30 x 27 mm)
MM504



Horizontal Semi Jumbo
***(46 x 36 mm)* – MM505**



Vertical Semi Jumbo
***(36 x 46 mm)* – MM506**



Famous Americans
(30 x 34 mm)
MM507



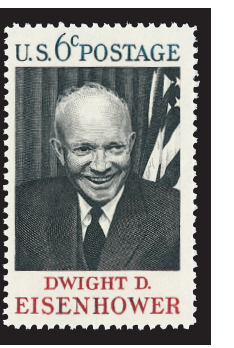
Horizontal Jumbo – *(55 x 36 mm)*
MM508

You can also go to MysticStamp.com and type in the Scott number. Once on the stamp's product page, click the button beneath the price listing labeled "Mounts".

You can also search by size in millimeters. Just enter the dimensions in the search bar at the top of the page and click the mounts you want.

We also offer a FREE Mount-Sizing Guide. Go to MysticStamp.com/mountguide to download the PDF.

Note: Most mounts for water-activated stamps are 5 mm larger than a stamp in both directions. Those for self-adhesives are 6-7 mm larger. Measurements may be rounded up for better fit.



Vertical Jumbo
***(36 x 55 mm)* – MM509**

The Mystic Advantage for Collectors

Located in Camden, New York, Mystic Stamp Company has been serving stamp collectors across America since 1923! Chairman of the Board Donald Sundman and 100 dedicated colleagues offer you many ways to enjoy your hobby.

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E-mail: info@MysticStamp.com
To order toll-free call: 1 (800) 433-7811
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- We prioritize consistency and accuracy. That's why we have only 1 Grader and 1 Backup Grader on staff. They carefully assess each stamp based on objective, long-established criteria. This eliminates opinions and gray areas for unmatched consistency over time.
- Combined, our graders have been with Mystic for 49 years and have 23 years of experience grading.
- Some dealers think we're too picky. We think we have high standards that benefit you and the Mystic Family of collectors!

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★★★★★

Stamp Collecting made easy.

Been stamp collecting for almost fifty years.
Mystic Stamp made it alot easier to find the stamps I needed for my collection.

Joey L. *July 17, 2026*

★★★★★

The mystic stamp co. makes collecting addictive

★★★★★

I LOVE MYSTIC!

★★★★★

Ask and you will receive

★★★★★

A great resource

★★★★★

Wonderful service and quality

★★★★★

Great website

★★★★★

Worth It

★★★★★

Great Support

★★★★★

Painless purchases

★★★★★

Love em!

★★★★★

First experience shopping - Awesome!!

★★★★★

Mystic makes philately easy and fun

★★★★★

Consistently high standards

★★★★★

Great service!

GLOSSARY OF STAMP COLLECTING TERMS

Adhesive: A gummed postage stamp intended for affixing on letters and other mail.

Airmails: Stamps issued specifically for use on airmail letters. Catalog Designation: C.

American Bank Note Co.: Company printing US stamps from 1879 until 1894, as well as the 1940s Overrun Countries series and others.

Approvals: Stamps sent to collectors by dealers for purchase or return after examination. (Mystic's free at-home service is one of the easiest, most convenient ways to build a great collection. And you get to pick and choose before you buy!)

Block: Usually four stamps attached in a block and referred to as a "block of four."

Bureau of Engraving & Printing (BEP): Printer of nearly every US stamp issued from 1894 until 2005. The BEP no longer prints postage stamps.

Cancellation: Mark on stamp to show it has been postally used.



Centering: The way the design on a stamp is positioned in relation to its margins.



Cinderella: A stamp-like label not valid for postage. Christmas Seals and some revenue and old local post stamps are Cinderellas.

Coil: Stamps issued in rolls, rather than sheets. Coil stamps have straight edges on two opposite sides.

Commemorative: Stamps honoring persons, events, or themes. Sold for a limited time only.

Compound Perforations: More than one gauge of perforation on the same stamp, such as 11 x 10. **Condition:** Quality of a stamp regarding its centering, color, gum, and if used or mint.

Continental Bank Note Co.: Company which held the contract for printing US postage stamps from 1873 to 1879.

Controlled Mail: System where mail is sent bearing specific stamps, with the intention of the canceled stamps being returned to sender.

Convertible Booklet: A small pane of self-adhesive stamps manufactured so it can be folded into a booklet.

C.T.O.: Canceled to Order stamps have been canceled, but have not been through the mail.

Definitive: Regular-issue stamps produced for several years. Usually smaller than commemoratives and they may be re-issued.

Die: A small flat piece of soft steel used in the printing of a stamp. The stamp design is engraved on the die, which in turn prints it on the stamp.

Die Cut: Cut by a metal device to produce perforation-like wavy or saw-toothed lines to allow for separating stamps. Self-adhesive stamps are die-cut.



Error: Stamp with a mistake in color, perforations, or design. This is Scott #1204.

Essay: Preliminary stamp design that is either not used, or is used with changes.

Europa: Stamps issued by a group of European nations with a common design theme.



Face Value: Monetary value of a stamp, determined by postal authorities; its printed denomination. Modern "Forever" stamps have no denomination indicated and are good for whatever the current postal rate is.

Farley's Follies: In the 1930s, Postmaster General James Farley created a scandal by giving imperforate, ungummed versions of new stamps to his friends and family.

First Day Cover: Envelope bearing stamp canceled on the first day of issue. Most covers from 1935 on have a "cachet." The cachet is a design on the cover which relates to the topic of the stamp being issued.

Flatbed Press: A printing press which uses a flat rather than a curved plate and is usually fed one sheet at a time.

Frank: To show that postage has been prepaid, as with a stamp.

Freak: A stamp showing a production flaw which is not consistent – includes ink smudges and off-center perforations.

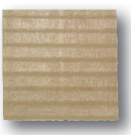


Grill: Rows of pyramid-shaped embossing, impressed into the back of certain stamps. Grills broke stamp fibers, letting cancellation ink sink in, making re-use of stamp impossible.



Gum: The adhesive used on lick-&-stick stamps.

Gum Breaker: Colorless ridges across the adhesive on the backs of stamps. "Breaks" the adhesive so stamps won't curl.



Gum Skip: A portion of a stamp, usually near the edge of a pane where the gum has not been applied during production.



Gutter Pair: Pair of stamps with wide gutter between. The gutter also separates stamp sheets into panes. Vertical gutter means gutter (not stamp) is vertical.



Hinge: Small gummed paper strip for attaching a stamp to an album page.

Hunting Permit Stamp: Issued yearly by the US government since 1934, sales of these "duck" stamps also help finance the federal waterfowl program. Catalog Designation: RW.

Imperforate Stamp: A stamp having no perforations. Individual stamps must be cut from the sheet.



Invert: Stamp with a portion of the design printed upside down.

Line Pair: Attached pair of stamps with a printed guideline running between.

Linerless Coil: Self-adhesive coil stamp issued without backing paper.



Horizontal line pair

Microprinting: Tiny print added to a stamp design as a security measure.

Miniature Sheet: Sheet of 25 stamps or less, not issued for a specific commemorative purpose.

Mint: In unused, original condition.

Mint Sheet: Sheet of stamps in uncanceled condition, as it came off the press.

Missionaries: The first four stamps of the Hawaiian Islands. Extremely scarce.



Hawaiian Missionary Stamp

Mount: Clear sleeve which allows a stamp to be placed in an album without using a hinge.

National Bank Note Co.: Company which held the contract for printing US stamps from 1870 to 1873.

Official Stamp: Stamp used by various departments of the government. Catalog Designation: O.

Omnibus Issue: Stamps issued by several different countries commemorating the same event and often having similar designs.

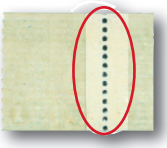
Overprint: Stamp to which printing is added on top of the original design.



Pane: Stamps come off the press in large sheets known as press sheets. These are cut into smaller sheets called panes, before being sent to post offices for sale to the public.

Parcel Post Stamp: Special stamps issued for use only on parcels weighing more than 16 ounces. Catalog Designation: Q.

Paste-up Pair: A pair of coil stamps which shows the place where two sheets of stamps were pasted together.



Perfin: Stamp perforated by private firms, through the design portion with initials.



Perforations: Small rows of "teeth" and the holes punched between them to make separating stamps easier.



Perforation Number: The number of perforations found in a space of 2 centimeters.

Philately: The collection and study of stamps, covers, and related postal material.

Pictorial Issue: 1869 series; first bi-color US stamps and first to honor something other than a president/statesman. Forerunner of US commemoratives. Generally, "pictorial" refers to any stamp with a scenic view.



Plate: Metal base used for printing stamps.

Plate Block: Block of 4 or more stamps with the printing plate number in the margin.



Plate Number Strip: A strip of three or five coil stamps with the middle stamp bearing a plate number.

Postage Due Stamps: Placed on mail to indicate not enough postage has been paid, these stamps show how much is owed to the Post Office. Catalog Designation: J.

Postal Stationery: Envelopes, postal cards, and aerogrammes with stamps printed or embossed on them.

Postmark: Cancellation mark on mail showing date and place of mailing.

Precancel: Stamp with the postmark applied before mailing of the article it pre-pays. Precancels applied by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing are called "bureau precancels".

Prestige Booklet: A stamp booklet with informative text, issued for a specific commemorative purpose.

Prexies: Popular term for the 1938 Presidential Series, US #803-34, #839-51.



Proof: Preliminary printing of a stamp to test color, design etc. Unlike an essay, proof designs are used on the finished stamps.

Regular Issue: Also known as a definitive, this stamp is issued over a long period of time and in various denominations. Regular issues are usually small in size.

Revenue Stamp: Used to show that taxes were paid on certain items like playing cards, liquor, or newspapers. Catalog Designation: R or R plus another letter.

Rotary Press: A printing press that uses

curved printing plates and a continuous roll of paper, called a web.

Self-Adhesive: Stamp issued on a special backing paper which, once peeled off, can be affixed without being moistened.

Selvage: The border of paper around a sheet or pane of stamps. *See page 19.*

Semipostal: Stamp with an additional charge (surcharge) to raise money for charity. Catalog Designation: B.



Transportation Series

Series: Stamps with a common theme which may be released and added to over a number of years.

Serpentine: Wavy line impressed into the paper between stamps in place of perforations, allowing for separation. Used on self-adhesive stamps.



Set: Complete series issued at one time which includes all the values in the set.

Se-Tenant: Two or more stamps with different designs or values printed together on the same sheet.



Sheet: Arrangement in which stamps come off a printing press; commemorative stamps are usually printed in sheets of 200.

Souvenir Sheet: A small sheet of stamps issued for a specific commemorative purpose, with inscription or artwork in its border. Usually issued in conjunction with a stamp show.

Special Delivery: Stamp which charges an extra fee for immediate delivery. Catalog Designation: E.

Specimen: Stamp which is overprinted with the word "specimen" to prevent stamp's use as postage. Specimens are used for reference.

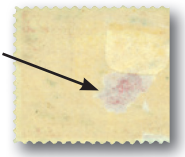


Stock Book: A book whose pages have a number of glassine strips forming pockets into which stamps can be inserted for storage.

Strip: Three or more attached stamps in a horizontal or vertical row.

Tagging: A chemical substance applied to a stamp which activates automatic cancellation machines.

Thin: An area where a layer of a stamp's paper has been removed, usually on the back.



Tongs: Metal implement used to handle stamps. They are not tweezers.

Topicals: Stamps which have a common theme, such as animals, flowers, space, etc.

Unused Stamp: Stamp which has never been used for postage, but may have one or two small imperfections. Mystic sells stamps with small flaws at a significant discount.

Used Stamp: Stamp which has been canceled or used for postage on a letter or package.

Vignette: The central portion of a stamp design.



Water-Activated: Stamp gum that needs moistening in order to adhere to a surface.

Watermark: A pattern that is impressed into paper during manufacture which helps discourage counterfeiting of stamps.

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