

Attending a stamp shows can be fun for every collector!



I received my introduction to stamp collecting from a close friend in 1986. She took me to a first day cancellation ceremony in Montclair, New Jersey. The cancellation was for the \$.22 Statue of Liberty stamp. There was a dual cancellation between the United States and France. A few weeks later we were shown how to get stamps canceled with envelopes. For the next few years I did not continue stamp collecting.

In 1994 I attended my first stamp show. It was a small show in New Jersey. Attending my first stamp show I felt like a kid visiting a toy store, but at this and a few other shows, I made a lot of mistakes. I purchased stamps and covers above the market price. I had no idea what I was doing. I was a rookie. I did not know even how to store my stamps and covers.

One day I received a free booklet from my local post office. The booklet was called *Introduction to Stamp Collecting*, published by the United States Postal Service. This booklet is a beginner's guide to stamp collecting. It gave me all kinds of tips on collecting stamps. It offered information about First Day Covers, different ways to collect, taking care of your collection, stamp organizations to join like the American Philatelic Society, different stamp publications like the weekly *Linn's Stamp News*, and *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogues*. Later, I purchased another USPS book, *The Postal Service Guide to U. S. Stamps*. This book showed all of the stamps issued since George

Washington's presidency along with Scott numbers and current market prices. A Scott number is given to each stamp by the catalog publisher, when it is issued. When purchasing stamps from dealers, you will find that most of them have their inventory organized by Scott numbers. One of the reason I may have over paid for stamp on my first visit was because I was not aware of books that give the current value of stamps. Before I attend any stamp show now, I do my home work; I make up a want list of stamps and covers, I need to add to my collection. Then I check my Scott's catalogue for the current prices of the stamps I am looking to purchase.

Attending a stamp show gives you a chance to see outstanding collections and exhibits, to look for stamps and supplies you need, to learn more about your hobby by attending open seminars and meetings, and to spend time with people who share the same interests that you enjoy. To help you enjoy it all, most stamp shows create a free program that lists all the events and participants so it's easy to see what's going on. Some larger shows host first-day ceremonies for new stamps. Collectors who attend the ceremony usually get a free program souvenir with the new stamp affixed and specially canceled. If you hear about a little show in your area make plans to attend. Lately, I've been attending a lot of local shows in my area. I am finding a greater number of different items for excellent prices at these show than at the larger shows. Many large stamp shows like the Mega Event offer free appraisals and a kids' area. Most shows will also have stamp supplies for sale, including stamp albums, tongs and other related materials.

Before you go to a stamp do your homework and know what you need. Here are a few things I do before I attend any show: Make up a want list. Your want list should have A) Scott numbers for the stamps you need B) Exactly what you need - example. plate block, singles, panel, covers etc. C) the current prices of the stamps you want. Also, don't purchase an item from the first few dealers you see. Look around for other dealers, the price may be a little lower. A couple of years ago I was looking for a Jackie Robinson hand painted cachet by Fred Collins. The first dealers was selling it for \$45.00. I shopped around and found it for \$30.00. By looking around I saved \$15.00. I only purchase from dealers who have their tables organized. This shows me that they take care of their products. Most of them are organized by Scott numbers. Some will have covers by topic and cachet maker.

At the stamp show, you can find just about anything you may be looking for, including stamps, covers, books and catalogs, and lots of different supplies. Specialist dealers may offer only stamps from one country or region, while others may have a worldwide selection from which to choose. When the dealer asks you "What do you collect?" let him know your interests. He'll tell you if he has what you're looking for, or he may point you towards another dealer who may be able to help. Many shows charge no admission fee, or charge a reasonable price.