

Did You Know?

For philatelists, a portion of our discretionary income goes towards making acquisitions. Thus, we should always look for ways to protect the investments we make. One way is to pursue philatelic expertisation, a process involving asking an authority to give an opinion on whether a philatelic item is genuine or altered in any way. Unfortunately, the philatelic world is littered with items that are forged, regummed or faked. There are even some items known to be frequently faked or altered that they require a certificate to stand even the remotest chance of sale. In this article, the first of two articles discussing expertising will provide an overview of expertising stamps, whereas the second will discuss expertising covers.

Having a reference collection and a great deal of experience will help in comparing and identifying stamps for their authenticity. In the United States, there are several expertising agencies that can be consulted including The Philatelic Foundation, American Philatelic Society, Professional Stamp Experts (PSE) and PSAG. Experts will examine items and determine if an item is a genuine example of a stamp in order to render an opinion.

Upon the examination of an item, a certificate is issued with a photograph which is traditionally embossed. The certificate contains a report of findings as well as any additional comments about the item.

ALTERATIONS

The second set of questions experts ask is if a stamp has been altered.

1. Have the question stamp's colors been changed? Stamp colors are known to chemically altered for some issues.
2. Have perforations been added or eliminated? Coil pairs are often altered with fake perforations and masquerade as a genuine examples.
3. Has the design been changed? Have minute design details been added or removed?
4. Regarding cancels – have any cancels or overprints been added or removed? If the stamp is cancelled, it is the correct usage for the period?



U.S. Scott No. 39 catalogs more in used condition than mint, thus giving an incentive to create fake cancels

REPAIRS

The final set of questions ask whether the stamp in question has been repaired. To answer these questions, experts often dip the stamp in watermark fluid, use magnification and mass spectrometry.

1. Have any tears been repaired or seamed back together?
2. Have any holes or thin spots been filled? Under watermark fluid, these can appear as spots with different types of paper.
3. Are there any perforations that have been added or fixed? Have any previous creases been flattened?
4. Has the stamp in question faced any cleaning? Exposure under ultraviolet light makes removed cancels reappear.
5. Has the stamp been regummed?

BASIC IDENTIFICATION

The first series of questions experts ask answer whether a stamp is a genuine example of a known and cataloged stamp issue. The following identification questions are asked:



An example of a Philatelic Foundation and Professional Stamp Experts Certificates



1. Is the questioned stamp's design identical to known genuine examples?
2. Is the measured size consistent with known genuine examples?
3. Was the stamp printed using the same printing method (i.e. Engraving, Photogravure, Lithography?) If it is a reprint, there can be subtle differences in the design and printing.
4. Is the paper identical to known examples' paper (Comparison of color, thickness and types)?
5. If the stamp is known to be watermarked, is it the same watermark type?
6. Are the perforation types, measurements and spacing consistent with known examples?
7. Is the color a match?
8. If genuine examples are known to be tagged, is the questioned stamp tagged?
9. Is the gum correct?



Perforations on Washington-Franklin coils are known to be faked – pursue a certificate