

Common Sense And Logic

These are not reasoning skills taught in the bastions of higher education, but something we all acquire, develop and hone over the course of our existence. It troubles me at the number of collectors who seem to have abandoned these skills when it comes to adding to their collections. As an example a collector buys a very expensive stamp at auction or from a dealer, which is also accompanied by a certificate, paying many thousands of dollars, puts the stamp in his album and forgets about it. Then years later it is time to sell the collection. He is advised to have all of his certificates updated. Lo' and behold the very expensive stamp with the certificate comes back with a different opinion one that is not favorable.

Both collectors and dealers have come to depend on certificates the way a baby clings to its security blanket. If it has a "clean" certificate the stamp must be "OK". There are three things that you need to remember about that certificate that came with your stamp:

1. Does the certificate match the stamp?
2. It is not a certificate but an opinion (with no guarantee).
3. Experts can make mistakes, miss something, after all, they are human as well.

When you buy something, YOU need to study and research it, if necessary, to make sure you have what you thought you purchased. If you are not interested in learning about your stamps, make sure you have an agent that can review your purchases. It is amazing the hoops people will put themselves through when buying race horses, vintage cars, or even a house.

Here is another logical reason to study your "certified" purchases. The condition of the stamp shown on the certificate is the condition it was in on the day that certificate was created. As each day goes by, and the stamp passes from dealer to dealer to collector, there is a chance that the condition of the stamp may change just through the normal course of handling. You would not find any of these changes on your certificate. As each year passes, the chances of something happening to a stamp as it changes hands multiply.

Philately is an intellectual pursuit, meant to be enjoyable. Take the time to enjoy and study your stamps.

Looking Forward to 2011...

This should be another great year for collectors. A tremendous amount of fabulous material passed from auctions to dealer stocks in the past year and should reach the retail market place this year.

We plan to increase our presence on the web this year and gradually dial back on shows. Twenty years ago, we did around 40 shows a year and in 2011 we will be down to just seven. There are some shows we will attend just to meet and greet and it is nice to have the opportunity to just buy. One of those will be TEXPEX which is hosting the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society annual meeting. This will be my last board meeting as a director of the society (I have been term limited out).

All the best for the New Year,
Jim

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