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## WHERE STAMP DEALERS - GET THEIR <br> * STAMPS *

A Mystery Never Before Revealed.

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# WHERESTAMP DEALERS GET TEIEIR <br> <br> * <br> <br> * STAMPS * 

whrre dealers get their stamps is a secret unlike most secrets, for it cannot be told in a few pithy words. To explain it is like telling where the river gets its water; for it is not one bubbling spring or a single brook that makes a river. And yet it is little more than a great many of these insignificant water sources that supply the largest rivers in our land, and in turn fill the great ocean. The stamp dealer has no one way of keeping his boxes filled to overflowing with those attractive gummed labels so highly prized by the stamp collector. Sometimes the boxes get too full, and it is more trouble to empty them, that is, to find ready purchasers for the stamps in them, than to lay in a new stock when the old has become exhausted. This, however, is not always the case, for it inust be admitted that there are many stamps unprocurable to-day, either by dealer or vollector.

When we said boxes full of stamps we had reference to the general run of stamps that the average colleotor purchases, The rarer ones never come by the box, and like diamonds are kept se-
cure under lock and key when actually in stock.
The larger stamp dealers use many hundred thousand stamps each year. Collectors, and even more so parties who know nothing about stamps, are, we find, not a little curious to know where so many stamps come from. The object of this article is simply to answer, once for all, this puzzling question.

In the first place we will say something about the older stamps, - the kind that do not come by the box, as we have said, and finally we will have something to say alout those that are bought by the bushel, barrel, or hundred-weight.

A large dealer advertises widely. It is the judicious use of printers' ink that makes his name familiar to every collector in the land. He is also known abroad. He not only advertises his wares but lets people know that he is quite as willing to buy stamps as to sell them. Old collectors re. member this, and when hard pressed for ready cash, a predicament not uncommon to mankind, they march off down the street with their valuable stamp collections under their arm, not in search of the nearest pawn-shop, but the stamp realer above referred to. Their collections were made some twenty years ago, perhaps, and the stamps in them that once sold for a few cents are now old and valuable. Such collections bring large prices, and the buyer wishes they were more plenty. The greater part of the stamps a dealer huys are not
procured in this way, but it is through the purchase of old collections that the rarer stamps find their way ints the market. Parties who have valuable col ections are, as a rule, conservative about selling their treasures and therefore the more desirable stamps are eagerly bought up by a dealer whenever offered for sale.

All the large dealers publish liste and catalogues of stamps they are particularly in need of, which quote cash and exchange prices offered by them for these stamps. The buying lists have a large circulation, not only among collectors who have duplicates to sell, but among bankers, importers, foreign missionaries, ocean steamship companies, and all other concerns handling large mails. The bankers in the United States receive many large registered letters containing U. S. stamps of high values. These stamps are always in demand. The importers etc. receive the foreign stamps on letters, many of which are valuable.

## II.

Collectors find the buying list a most useful help to them. Those who live in the city have little difficulty in obtaining duplicates to sell or exchange.

The U. S. stamps of high values are found at the banks. A boy who is on the right side of the janitor of a bank can gain admittance to the wastepaper pile in the basement of the bank, where treasures are sure to be found. Not a great many years ago, when the old U. S. 3c green stamps were in use, the writer of this article used to make weekly raids on one of the largest banks in Boston. It was there that he found, in great quantities, six-cent envelope stamps on all varieties of paper. These stamps are now worth about seventy-five cents apiece, but of course were not bringing that then. Six, fifteen, and thirty-cent adhesive stamps were also found in the same waste-heap, were rapidly torn from the envelope, and thrown into a bag. Even some of the 3c envelope stamps on certain kinds of paper are now beginning to rise in value, but then were so common, in that heap of five thousand or more letters, that no attention was paid to them. When the Columbus series of stamps came into use, a large part of these were mined underneath banks in the
same way, and afterwarde sold to dealers. Dealers, in turn, sent them abroad, in exchange for other stamps, or kept the higher values for a rainy day. A great many hundred thousand of the common 1c and 2c Dolumbus stampe were sant to Europe shortly after they came into use, but we regrat to say that the market is now flooded with these two denominations, and no dealer wishes to purchase mare. Good U. S. stamps always have a market value, however, and can be disposed of with little trouble.

On days when school is not in session city boys go "stamping." This is what they call hunting for stamps in offices down town. They have a list of places where stamps are given away for the asking, and it is at these places that they make frequent calls, asking each proprietor if he has any stamps to-day. Importers of sugar and molasses, for instance, receive letters from the West Indies; tea merchants, from Japan; steamship companies, from Europe, largely; and foreign missionary societies from India, Turkey, and elsewhere. These are the parties the stamp-seeker is on the watch for.

One boy returns home from his stamp expedition with a pocket full of Porto Rico's, perhaps, another has a set of Eastern Roumelian's, sent on a package to the secretary of some missionary society, and so on. These stamps are exchanged when duplicates are found among them, or a
hundred or more are sold to a dealer, and the day's work conldered a profitable one.

Collectors who live in the country have not the advantages of the city folks in picking out of sombody's waste-basket a handful of rare stamps; but nevertheless they sometimes outdo their city cousins in a rare find. Those old hair trunks of grandmother's, filled with innumerable keepsakes of a former day, of mouldy records, or letters from grandfather when he was away from home, contain old stamps. In some cases these stamps may not be rare, even if they are old; in others, they may be worth hundreds of dollars. Old local stamps found in this way should never be torn from the envelope, as the date and mode of cancellation on the envelope often increase the value of a stamp.

Whell grandmother has no trunk containing old letters, look up somebody's else grandmother. Make four wants known to all your friends; get them to search for you; and some day, when you least expect it, you will find a philatelic gem.

Dealers do a great deal of buying and exchanging among themselves. Some call themselves wholesalers and sell only to retailers; others both retail and wholesale; others prefer to be called jobbers, and travel around among the fraternity with a valise full of rubbish they would be glad to rid themselves of, if they only could.

When a dealer finds a good opportunity to pur-
chase an immense lot of duplicate stamps, he usually makes the most of his opportunity and buys the lot, even if he is obliged to borrow the money to do so. He then has on hand more stamps of a certain kind than he can use in his own retail business, and for the time being, in order to dis. pose of his surplus, becomes a jobber or wholesaler Almost all the large dealers have specialties they can offer other dealers at an attractive price. Ons large retailer, for instance, has a great many cus tomers in South America, and receives mors stamps from Brazil, let us say, than he can dis pose of at retail prices. He then does one of twr things:- either sell at wholesale or exchange his Brazilian stock with other retail dealers; or else hand his stock over to a wholesaler without at tempting to "work it off" among his colleagues. In all cases there is less distinction to be made between a large retailer and a wholesaler than is sometimes supposed.
Some dealers advertise to sell stamps at auction Parties having large collections often prefer tu pay a dealer a commission for selling theis stamps in this way than to sell them outright $t$ c the dealer for a fixed sum. Each stamp of any value is then catalogued separately and sold to the highest bidder. Dealers are usually amont the bidders at these auctions and procure manj desirable stamps in this way.

Large dealers are usually large importers
other wholesalers and retailers purchase the greater part of their foreign stamps in the countries where they are used for postage. The pursuit of stamp collecting, as you know, has extended itself around the world. This cannot be said, probably, of any other hobby. In China and Japan, for instance, you will find collectors just as you find them in this country ; and in Europe there are half a dozen to every one here.
A collector on the Fiji Islands, let us say, wishes to make a collection of stamps from all parts of the world. How does he do it? He gets all his friends at home to save for him Fiji stamps, and when he has accumulated a thousand or more sends them to some American dealer, whose advertisement he has read somewhere, and receives in exchange for them stamps of other countries.

Foreign dealers also export the stamps of their own locality to our American dealers, receiving cash or Anserican stamps in return. The common stamps of Europe, called "Continentals," are exported to America by the millions annually. Every collector starts his collection on these and hence they are in great demand among beginners. They might well be called the foundation stones of every collection. These stamps are usually sold abroad by weight, and often a hundred pounds or more exported at a time.
A few words will now be said about reprints, postoffice remainders, speculative and commemorative
issues, and counterfeits.
There is a vast difference between these kinds of stamps. Reprints and counterfeits, for instance, are as much unlike each other as white differs from black. All the large dealers sell reprints. No reputable dealer would sell a counterfeit. There are dishonest parties who make a business of manufacturing and selling counterfeits, but the offence is punishable by law, and collectors should-not patronize them. Reprints are often as poorly executed as counterfeits, but the general appearance of a stamp does not necessarily reveal its character. Some collectors are averse to buying reprints, but that does not condemn them. Some collectors will not buy an unused stamp, while others buy nothing but unused ones: so let everybody have his own taste. But the real reason why many collectors will not purchase a reprint is because, in some way or other, they have confounded the word "reprint" with "counterfeit," and think the two are but different names for the same article. Of course this only shows their ignorance.

Suppose a country stops issuing a certain stamp which, after awhile, becomes rare. The demand for this stamp increases until the government agrees to reprint from the original plates several
thousand more copies of it solely for the use of collectors. This stamp is a reprint, and in no sense a counterfeit. The original stamp hecame so rare that few collectors were able to purchase it, but now the reprint can be bought for a few cents. It fills the same space in the album, and is an inestimable help to the collector who has not a million dollars to spend on his collection. Sometimes the original plates are sold to private parties who issue, the stamps in the same way. In the latber case they are called "private reprints," and in the former, "goverument reprints."

Every line on a reprint is exactly the same as on the original stamp. It could not be otherwise, for tho two are practically one and the same. On a counterfeit, however, every line does not agree with the original. A counterfeit is made from a new plate which merely imitates the original. If you compare, under a magnifying glass, a real stamp with its counterfeit, you will see that there sla great difference between them. One is but a rough imitation of the other, and in no sense a postage stamp.

The Roman States stamps sold to-day for a few cents each are good examples of the reprint. So many copies have been printed from the old plates that the impression is now blurred and irregular. The used Roman States stamps, however, are scarce, and bring several dollars apiece. The triangular - Gape of Good Hope stamps advertised dy dishonest dealers for a cent or two apiece are examples of the counterfeit. In Europe the business of making
and selling counterfeits is far more general than in this country. There one can buy fairly-good imitations of the complete set of United States Columbus stamps for a few cents.

In addition to reprinted stamps the stamp dealer buys what are known as Post-Office remainders. Certain countries, after issuing a new series of stamps, dispose of all their old stock by selling it to dealers for less than face value. A decree is issued to the effect that, after a certain date, none of the old stamps shall be used for postage, after which bids for the entire lot are sent it. Several million stamps are often sold to one large dealer, or perhaps to several, for one-fith, or less, of their face value.

The profit from the sale of remainders has become so great that many countries now issue annually a new series of stamps more for the purpose of the collector than the letter writer. Such stamps are called "speculative issues."

The Society for the Suppression of Speculative Stamps, composed largely of dealers, has done something towards diminishing the number of speculative issues, and yet every month we hear of a new batch fresh from China or South America.

In commemoration of the birthday of some great hero or leader, or of any historical event of importance, certain countries issue "commemorative stamps." The United States Columbus stamps
belong to this class. Some commemorative stamps are used but a single day, and become very rare as soon as they go out of use. Dealers buy these stamps on the day they are used for postage, and often make large profits by securing a great many at face value.

This completes the article on "how dealers get their stamps." As we have said defore, the stock of a large stamp dealer is obtained through no single channel; and the successful dealer must always be on the alert to make the most of every oppartunity to buy.



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