

# The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

[www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org](http://www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org)

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## Some Thoughts about the \$2 un-Inverted Jenny

When is a stamp a stamp?

When a customer purchases a postage stamp it represents a pre-payment for services to be rendered some time in the future. Sometimes the stamp is valid for only a certain period of time. Sometimes a stamp is valid for only a certain specific type of service. (Ex. Special Delivery stamps.) After being manufactured

stamps are delivered to the USPS which then distributes them to various points of sale, mostly post offices and bulk mailing centers. The stamps are then stored until either sold to a customer or returned for destruction.



Manufactured? Isn't "printed" the correct term? A stamp is more than just ink on a piece of paper. That is just a portion of the process of manufacturing a stamp. The sheets of paper also have to be cut into panes, coils, or booklets, trimmed to size, gummed and perforated. In the case of coils, they need to be rolled into coil format and secured, sometimes individually wrapped in cellophane. Stamps need to be placed "inside" booklets, then glued or secured by staples. In the case of self-adhesive stamps a backing paper is required. Prior to shipping to the various post offices and points of sale, stamps also must be packaged into groups for security and for accounting purposes.

Although a stamp has been sold to a customer, it really fulfils its purpose and becomes a stamp when it is affixed to a piece of mail and presented to the post office for delivery. Prior to that time, it remains just a colorful piece of paper with the *potential* for paying for services at certain designated places only. (Try using that stamp in a different country, or try using it at FedEx or UPS. It has no value there.) Because governments change, currencies change, or simply because of a change of regulations, that potential is never realized. The stamp has been de-monetized, and it truly does become a colorful piece of paper. At that point it still can be saved ("collected") just like pretty rocks can be collected. It may have a secondary market value but it no longer can be used as a stamp. Nevertheless, it is still called a stamp.

Calling a piece of paper a stamp when it no longer is valid to be used as a stamp is somewhat confusing. It is something akin to calling a pile of leaves and branches a “tree.” But just as



those leaves and branches, to be called such, had to once have been part of a tree, a stamp to be called a stamp had once to have had the possibility of being used for postage. The importance of this confusion becomes apparent when considering what “stamps” should be considered “stamps” and thus be included in a catalog of stamps.

During the past two years there has been considerable debate about the non-inverted \$2 Jenny – the “upright version.” A brief history may be helpful to understand these debates.

In 1918 the P.O.D. (Post Office Department) began offering air mail service between New York city and Washington, D.C. Stamps were manufactured and sold that were for the express purpose of pre-payment for that air mail service. The cost was 24¢ for 1 ounce, which included 10¢ for special delivery. Those first Catalog number C3) featured a printed in blue ink, with a red frame phases. First a sheet of paper had through a printing press a second sheet of paper was turned 180° after the first color was printed resulting in the center image (the airplane) appearing to be flying upside down in relation to the frame of the stamp. Only one pane of 100 stamps with the inverted center was sold. The buyer of those stamps immediately sold the pane into the stamp collecting market, purchased by a wealthy stamp collector for \$200 per stamp - \$20,000 for the pane of 100 – a very large sum in 1918. None of the inverted Jenny’s ever was used for postage. The pane was subsequently broken into individual stamps and blocks, and sold to other wealthy collectors. Today a single inverted Jenny stamp can sell at auction for about half a million dollars.



stamps for air mail service (Scott Curtiss JN- 4D airplane (the “Jenny”), around it. Printing was done in two one color printed; then it was fed time to print the other color. One

Arguably the inverted Jenny is the most famous U.S. stamp. It is listed in Scott as C3a. (The lower case “a” signifies that it is a variety of the C3 stamp.) The fact that it is listed in Scott is important because a goal of many collectors is to collect one copy of each stamp listed in



Scott. Publishers of stamp albums, with knowledge of that desire, print stamp albums with spaces for each stamp listed in Scott. Thus stamp collectors with albums with a blank space for the inverted Jenny want that stamp to complete their collection and fill in that blank space in their albums. The fame of the Inverted Jenny stamp grew larger and larger.

Fast forward to the year 2013. The POD (now the United States Postal Service – USPS) has a special committee that recommends what commemorative stamps the USPS should offer to the public, and the USPS recognizes the huge profitability of selling stamps to collectors who will never use them for postage. An opportunity to sell reproductions of the Inverted Jenny to the public is seized and the price is jacked up from the original 24¢ to \$2 each. To make the sale even more profitable the \$2 Inverted Jenny stamps are sold only in souvenir sheets (s/s) of six stamps, a minimum of \$12 to obtain an Inverted Jenny. (Cheap, when compared to the half million dollars an original one now costs.) The stamps are valid for postage, but there is no rate requiring \$2, or a multiple thereof. The term “souvenir sheet” indicates that the primary intention of the sale of these sheets is that they be kept in collections and never used for postage.

1,000,000 Inverted Jenny souvenir sheets were printed. The American Philatelic Society has about 30,633 members. If every APS member wanted one of those Inverted Jenny s/s there would be approximately 969,367 of the 1,000,000 s/s that would remain unsold - not good for the USPS. It would be much better to sell all million of the sheets, right? So, the USPS cleverly devised a secret way to entice collectors to purchase more than just one sheet. The USPS intentionally printed an additional 100 s/s with the \$2 inverted Jenny NOT inverted. Those “right side up” s/s were randomly (supposedly, but not in reality) sold among the Inverted Jenny s/s. To make it impossible to determine if a customer was purchasing an Inverted Jenny souvenir sheet or a “right side up” souvenir sheet, each souvenir sheet was enclosed in an opaque sealed envelope, and those envelopes were then sealed inside a cellophane envelope. Thus, even USPS clerks would not be able to tell if they were selling one of the rare “right side up” souvenir sheets.

The USPS correctly figured out that stamp collectors would purchase many copies of the Inverted Jenny s/s, hoping to obtain one of the “right side up” s/s. Well, maybe not so correctly. After more than two years of sale, it appears that fewer than one third of the souvenir sheets have been sold.

It is important to note that it was not possible to order a non-inverted Jenny souvenir sheet. As such they were not offered for sale by the U.S.P.S. Similarly, the original 24¢ Inverted Jenny could not be ordered as such from the P.O.D. The difference, and it is a BIG difference, is that the original 24¢ inverted Jenny was accidentally produced and sold, whereas the \$2 un-Inverted Jenny was intentionally produced and sold.

Scott has had a long-time policy of not listing in its catalogs stamps intentionally produced in small quantities with the result, intentionally or not, of creating a demand among collectors that makes the stamp - an immediate rarity - become expensive, way above face value. Those intentionally rare stamps that are thus produced are NOT issued with the intention of ever being USED for postage. They are produced strictly as collectibles. That policy by Scott Catalogue obviously has a certain amount of judgement involved by the Scott editors. For example, the Lewis and Clark stamps, Scott 3855 and 3856, were available only in a souvenir book costing \$8.95. This was a premium of \$1.55 over the face value of the twenty 37¢ stamps, a 21% premium. However, there was a small, full color 32 page booklet that was included, so the extra \$1.55 could be justified.

The non-listing policy by Scott has greatly benefitted stamp collectors because it discourages countries from issuing limited quantity stamps, never intended to be used postally, and available to collectors only by paying a steep premium over face value. Those stamps in mint condition could theoretically be used for postage in the issuing country, but only a very foolish person would spend \$100.00 for a stamp with a face value of 10¢ - and then use it for postage.

Thus, a collector COULD purchase a souvenir sheet of the non-inverted Jenny and then use the stamps for postage. In other words, the stamps are VALID for postage. The current market value for an un-Inverted Jenny s/s is about \$50,000. What person in his right mind would then use those stamps for \$12 of postage? The answer, of course, is nobody. Therefore, claiming that the stamps are valid for postage is just simply silly, for it would be akin to buying a bunch of diamonds and using them for gravel in your driveway. (Yes, they could be used that way, but nobody would, at least not intentionally.

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In conclusion, the un-inverted \$2 Jenny is not a postage stamp. It is not intended to be used as such, and so far, nobody has ever been silly enough to use one for postage. They were intentionally produced as a collectible. Therefore, Scott editors are entirely correct in not listing it in the Scott Catalogue of Postage stamps. On the other hand, the \$2 Inverted Jenny souvenir sheets can be ordered from the USPS for face value, and can be and have been

frequently used for postage. The \$2 Inverted Jenny souvenir sheet therefore is properly listed in the Scott Catalogue of Postage Stamps, and the \$2 un-Inverted Jenny souvenir sheets are properly NOT listed in the Scott Catalogue.



Don't agree? Well, that is one of the very interesting aspects of the philatelic hobby! Each stamp collector can determine exactly what he or she wants to collect, and what not to collect – and nobody is right or wrong.

This edition of the Philatelikid covers the months of July and August because there are no stamp club meetings at schools due to the Summer break.

If you have something relating to stamp collecting that you think might be appropriate for this newsletter, please feel free to send it to Robert W. Martin at the address listed below.

**Comments? Write Robert W. Martin, P.O. Box 1809, Kihei, HI 96753 (Try to use a nice stamp on your letter.)**

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