

The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

Collect Stamps (The Most Educational Hobby)

www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org

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The Humble Hinge – Part 1

When stamp collecting first became a hobby, there was no agreed-upon way to collect and mount



stamps. Some collectors merely affixed their mint stamps by licking them and placing them in their albums – just as if the stamps were affixed to an envelope. That worked just fine, except there was a big problem when the stamp collector

wanted to re-arrange the stamps on a page. Removing a stamp meant that the page had to be torn out and “soaked” in water, then the stamp had to be dried and flattened, and then a new page in the album would have to be used. This of course meant that all the stamps on the page would have to be remounted. Also, once the stamp was soaked free, the gum would all be washed off and the result was that the stamp would then have to be affixed the second time using glue or paste. Early on this was recognized to be unsatisfactory, so some enterprising person (nobody knows who, but probably many people) devised a method of using a small folded piece of gummed paper to affix the stamp. Early-on versions of these hinges were very hardy and could not be easily removed, so when a stamp was removed from an album and re-located, a piece of the hinge would remain affixed to the back of the stamp. Those pieces of hinges that remain on the backs of stamps are called “hinge remnants.” If a stamp got moved several times, there would be hinge remnants piled on top of each other, making the stamp very thick. So often a collector would try to peel off the remnant, but this sometimes resulted in peeling off a part of the back of the stamp itself, thus creating what we call a “thin.”



A stamp that has a “thin” on the back is considered a damaged stamp, even though it is not visible by looking at the front of the stamp, and normally a thin cannot be detected without first removing the stamp

from the album to examine the back of the stamp. Nevertheless, this was the normal way stamps were collected and mounted for over a hundred years. Large stamps and blocks of stamps often required more than one hinge to prevent them from twisting or falling off due to their own weight or size.

Fortunately, inventors came up with improvements so that hinges became more easily removable, thus NOT leaving hinge remnants (“HR”), and also, not damaging the stamp or album when removed. Of course, a mint stamp would have a small spot on the back where the original gum was slightly disturbed. Mint stamps that show an evidence that a hinge was on it at one time, but subsequently has been removed with no HR remaining are identified as “previously hinged.” Sometimes a magnifying glass is needed to see the tiny disturbance in the gum, which is important because many collectors prefer a stamp that is pristine – no disturbance in the gum. Never-hinged stamps normally sell at a premium over a previously hinged stamp. In the world of stamp collecting, a never-hinged stamp is identified by the letters (usually in caps) “NH.” A common way to identify an unused stamp is with a single asterisk (“*”). When two asterisks (“**”) are used, it means a never-hinged (“NH”) stamp. Remember, and unused stamp may have no gum at all, or have a HR, or have been previously hinged.

Many companies have manufactured hinges for collectors to buy, usually packaged in a small envelope containing a thousand hinges. Some examples are shown here. Most agree, the best hinges ever made were called “Dennison” hinges. The Dennison Company discontinued manufacturing hinges many years ago, but unopened packages can still be purchased – at a premium – by collectors who want to use high quality hinges, which are prized because they are easily removable without any damage to the stamps.

Used stamps have been soaked off the envelope on which they were used, and hence have no gum because it was washed away. Used stamps are also mounted with hinges, but because there is no gum, there is not a premium for a NH used stamp. Nevertheless, used stamps are frequently found with hinge remnants because the only way to get some of the more “hardy” hinges removed is by soaking the stamp (again) and many collectors are reluctant to do that. Soaking a stamp can result in other problems to the stamp such as a cancellation that “runs.” In some cases (rare) the ink itself runs or completely comes off the stamp – resulting in an uncollectible piece of plain white paper. In modern times, many inks can sometimes will flake off in spots – sometimes very tiny spots - when soaking occurs.

When purchasing a stamp that has a hinge remnant, be aware that it may cover up a thin that is lurking underneath the hinge remnant. Removing the hinge remnant just might disclose a problem that was not visible to the naked eye, but which could seriously affect the value of the stamp.

Next month – more about hinges and other mounts (not using hinges) that are popular for collectors of mint stamps, and higher value used stamps.

Happy Halloween

This month’s issue of *The Philatelikid* is being mailed on October 31, 2019 – Halloween – and the postage is one of the four “Spooky Silhouettes” stamps that the USPS just released. (Those of you with foreign destinations receive two different Spooky Silhouette stamps, totaling \$1.10 plus an additional 5¢ to equal the current rate of \$1.15 required postage to all foreign addresses.) To stamp collectors, an envelope with a stamp and a cancellation is termed a “cover.” So the cover that contains this issue of *The Philatelikid* may be one you want to save – a Halloween stamp with a Halloween cancellation!

Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are greatly appreciated and if \$10 or more you will be sent a written receipt. You also can donate via PayPal on our website - www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org or www.yummystampcollecting.org which will redirect you to the same site.