

What is an appraisable stamp collection?

Many people receive a stamp collection through an inheritance or some type of estate transfer, and have little idea of its value. For a novice, evaluating a large quantity of stamps can be a very overwhelming task. A few general guidelines are listed below to help you determine if your holding has enough of a market value to schedule a professional appraisal.

Appraisable Stamp List

Perhaps the easiest way to tell if a stamp collection has a value for appraisal is to answer the basic question, “how much did the collector spend on his/her collection per month, year, or over the years?” If the answer was nothing, and the stamps were found and came from letters, then the chance of having a valuable stamp collection is small. Additionally, “did the collector spend significant amounts of money on selected stamps or did the collector instead purchase large quantities of common stamps to fill spaces in an album?” If someone purchased scarce items for thousands of dollars, chances are they’ve gone up in value. If someone purchased a roomful of common stamps for a thousand dollars, it likely would not have appreciated in value. Always check invoices and receipts for clues as to the type of material that was collected and the prices paid. Another important thing to know is if the collection was insured, and if documentation of the policy can be provided.

Here are some stamp albums that contain spaces for better stamps; if you have any of these albums and they are fairly full or complete, then you probably have an appraisable collection:

- Any specialized album of a single country or geographic area
- Scott Specialty Albums
- Scott National Albums
- Lighthouse Hingeless Albums
- Elbe Albums
- Scott International Albums
- Master Global Albums
- Stanley Gibbons Imperial Albums
- Old (circa pre 1940) albums
- Individual items purchased from auction companies
- Items purchased that have attached certificates of authenticity from the APS, etc
- Large quantities of mint foreign and United States stamps in sheets
- Older United States and foreign covers (generally letters with stamps attached or postal history) **NO MODERN FIRST DAY COVERS.**

Not Appraisable Stamps

A dealer will usually purchase all stamp-related material including items on the “not appraisable” IF they are also stamps or collections included. They will not purchase a holding of items exclusively on the “not appraisable list.” While there are many valuable stamp collections in private hands, most stamp collections are common or in the beginner/hobby category – these collections are fun, educational, and put together, but usually have little or no significant value. If the collection has stamps of value, they should not be sold separately or you probably won't be able to sell the remainder.

- Beginner/Hobby Collections – usually put together by children or budget minded collectors consisting of common stamps bought from the post office over the last 60 years or bought in sets or packets from mail order stamp companies.
- Items manufactured by after-market companies such as: Gold Plated stamp replicas – singles or on envelopes. Items by such companies as the American Commemorative Society, Postal Commemorative Society, Franklin Mint, Heirloom Collection, etc. These types of products come in large albums with fancy binders and elaborate pictures. They have no resale value.
- First Day Covers – issued by postal services, Artcraft, Artmaster, etc. over the last 60 years have little or no resale value.
- Stamp supplies or empty albums.
- Commemorative panels and souvenir pages by the USPS.