

# The Great Big World of Small Pieces of History— Stamps

**New York City is about to become the focal point of the philatelic world**

By [Kati Vereshaka](#), [Epoch Times](#) | May 20, 2016

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Statue of Liberty stamp issued in 1994. (Courtesy of World Stamp Show)

History, geography, relaxation, and mystery—these are just some of the reasons why people love collecting stamps. And of course the visual stimulation of looking at colorful, miniature works of art is no small part of the passion that fuels collectors of every age, nationality, and walk of life.

New York City is about to become the focal point of the philatelic world when the [World Stamp Show New York 2016](#) descends upon it.

For eight days from May 28 to June 4, the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center will host the once-in-a-decade maelstrom of stamp-collecting activities with 200 stamp dealers, specialty philatelic organizations, and more than 70 postal bureaus from around the world will take part.



The rare “[inverted Jenny](#)” airmail postage stamp. (World Stamp Show)

For seasoned collectors the expo is something they would hardly dream of missing out on, since, according to the show’s spokesman, Alex Haimann, the expo will be the largest gathering of collectors and dealers from around the world, with largest array of rarities of this decade.

Haimann, now 30 years old, is, of course, an avid philatelist. He recounted how his fascination with stamps was awakened in the second grade, when his teacher brought some postage stamps into the classroom to teach a geography lesson.

“I was mesmerized, and still am, at the wonder of holding seemingly weightless pieces of paper in my hand, but each one from a different part of the world—it was like touching a part of those countries,” he said.

## The Rare and Valued

Generally speaking, stamp collecting is also one of the most easily accessible hobbies. It can cost very little, or a lot, a whole lot. Take the rather demure and not very visually exciting British Guiana One-Cent Magenta stamp that will be on show. It was purchased by shoe designer Stuart Weitzman in 2014 for \$9.48 million, making it the world’s most valuable stamp.



The world's most valuable stamp: the British Guiana One-Cent Magenta first issued in 1856 and currently held in the collection of Stuart Weitzman. (Courtesy of Smithsonian's National Postal Museum)

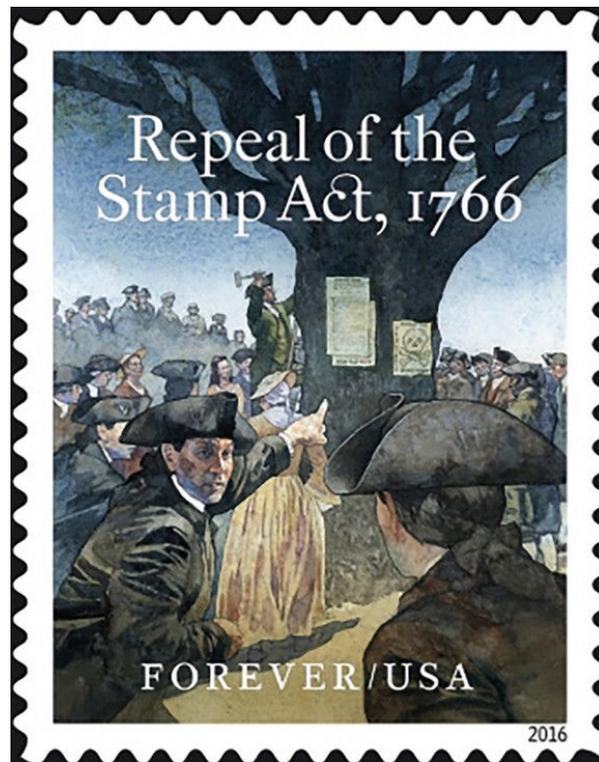
It's not just the fact that it is very old (it was issued in 1856 in British Guiana). British Guiana was renamed Guyana in 1966. The Penny Magenta is the only surviving stamp of a very small group of stamps that were issued, and remains the only one that is certified and recognized of its type. The Guyana 1 cent stamp is also the focal point of many stories in popular culture.

Rarities and printing errors are the stuff dreams are made of for collectors; the stamps are made interesting precisely because of the stories they carry. Propelled into the realm of exclusivity, they become collectors' gold.

The Audrey Hepburn Unissued Semi-Postal Stamp is a more recent example. Millions of this stamp were printed as part of a 2001 set honoring actors. However, her son's objection to her depiction, with a cigarette, saw the destruction of the print run. All the sheets were meant to be destroyed—yet 3 sheets out of 10 survived and were actually used as postage—something that has yet to be explained.

“Every collector wants to have a unique gathering of something; it's not about being like everyone else, so errors and varieties make things interesting for that reason,” said Haimann, adding that this collection of collections is not all about stamps, per se, although most things in the expo pertain to postal objects.

## The World of Post



Repeal of the Stamp Act stamp. (World Stamp Show)

Some people, for instance, specialize in collecting mail that has had something happen to it—mail recovered from an airplane crash or a ship that sank.

One unique collection of this nature is the mail recovered from the [1937 Hindenburg explosion](#) in New Jersey, when thousands of pieces of mail on board were burned. Yet, a few hundred survived, although they might be heavily burned at the edges.

The visual aspect is important, yet it is the historical that ultimately fascinates collectors.

This is unfortunately reflected in the fact that artists who create art specifically for stamp designs are called illustrators. They may be well-known artists, but once they are contracted by the U.S. postal service, creating the art becomes a collaborative project between the USPS art directors and the artist. The reward is a somewhat token sum of \$5,000, according to National Postal Museum assistant curator Calvin Mitchell, and of course the prestige of having one's art on a stamp.



Original artwork for Statue of Liberty Stamp by artist Tom Engerman. (Smithsonian's National Postal Museum)

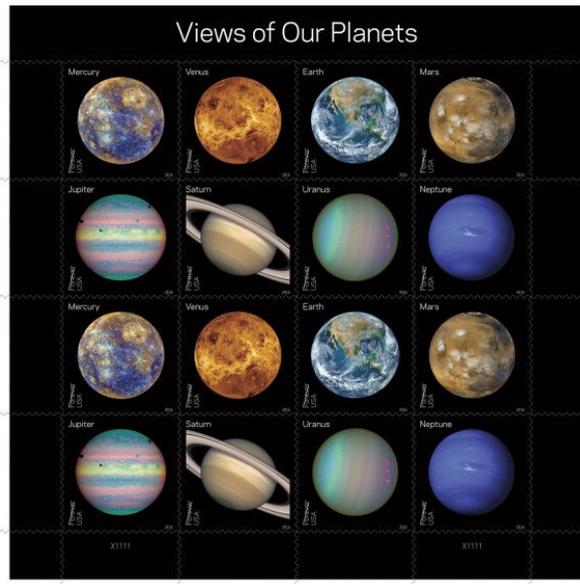
## **Exhibition**

A special exhibit of six pieces of original postage stamp artwork will be on display at the World Stamp Show depicting New York themes such as baseball, Broadway, city life, New York icons, politics, and music. It will be a chance for visitors to see the art before it becomes a stamp.

Apart from the Court of Honor section of the expo where the most valuable, rare, and unusual items will be found, there is the invited exhibits section where collectors of any age and interest will have access to new items purchase and add to their collections.

Haimann, who has been working on the expo since the last one took place in 2006, urged that the eight-day event is something to really savor and get with the adventure of collecting. It is a totally free event and visitors can spend as little as a couple of dollars on a stamp, or as much as thousands of dollars on a rare item, said Haimann, who encapsulated the whole experience of collecting by saying:

“It’s a wonderment that starts in childhood—the idea of imagining a world, or a place that’s not what you’ve experienced before. Whether you’re 60 years old or 6 years old, just for a moment while you’re looking at that stamp in your collection, thinking about what it was like when that stamp was issued.”



Apparently, there are many stamp shows that take place all over the country. But none are as big as the World Stamp Show New York 2016.

