



VERY Pricey Stamps

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Ardent stamp collectors will tell you that their hobby is actually an investment, but the track record compared with stock price rises is not encouraging. One recent study found that stamps valued at or above \$1,000 returned a 3.2% annual rate of return. Hopeful stamp collecting ‘investors’ buy an estimated 33% or more of every stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service. Yet by one estimate, more than 99% of unused U.S. stamps issued over the past 80 years now trade wholesale between stamp dealers at a discount to face value. Even formerly valuable stamps are now selling at a discount to catalogue value, and some online sources tell you to take those catalogue prices with a grain of salt.

But ultra-rare stamps have become trophies for the super-rich, and regularly spark bidding wars on the few occasions when they come to market. A 1918 stamp misprint commonly known as ‘the Inverted Jenny’ is believed to be the most valuable U.S. stamp, sold at auction in 2018 for \$1.35 million. The misprint is not hard to spot; the 24-cent stamp (quite expensive in its day) features one of the Jenny biplanes first used by the U.S. Postal Service to carry mail, but on a small handful of stamps, the plane was accidentally printed upside down.

An 1868 1 cent stamp with a portrait of Benjamin Franklin features an unusual pattern behind the portrait, known as the Z Grill. There are only two known surviving examples of this stamp; one was last sold at auction for \$935,000; the other was exchanged for a block of four Inverted Jenny’s valued at \$3 million.

A 3 cent rose pink stamp printed in 1867, with a portrait of George Washington, features another unusual background, known as a B Grill—a waffle-like pattern. Only four stamps are known to exist featuring this particular pattern, and the most recent auction price for one of them was \$900,000.

Finally, a 24-cent stamp issued in 1869, featuring the famous John Trumbull painting of the presentation of the Declaration of Independence to the Continental Congress, has sold at auction for \$625,000—\$150,000 more than you would pay for a share of Berkshire Hathaway, which, like the stamp, doesn't pay dividends.

Sources:

<https://www.financialpoise.com/investing-in-stamps/>

<https://517mag.com/business/stamp-collectors-take-a-licking/>

<https://www.invaluable.com/blog/most-valuable-stamps/>

If you have any questions about this article or want to discuss your family finances, investment portfolio, or financial planning advice, please call on me anytime at my number [\(215\) 325-1595](tel:2153251595) or you can [click here to schedule a meeting](#).

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