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Today's Collector
New Opportunities

Many Old Farts Stamp Forget to Look Up Information

How often do you look at something in your collection and have little idea of what makes your stamp or cover something of value, interest, or if it really is what you think it might be? In my years as a stamp dealer, there were times when I found myself facing a big question mark. What is it? That was a strange dog I owned years ago. At first glance, my wife asked me, "What Is He?" We named him Issy because of what she said. So, when you approach a cover or a stamp that holds something interesting, think "What is he?" Okay, without much more discussion of what something may hold in what we see, the object should be set aside, come back to look at it again, and if you are still puzzled, have a go at finding out what the odd cancel, stamp, weird town name in the address is or is not, and just about anything under the Sun that you need to find out about what you have. The impossible thing here is that your answer to what something is may be as simple as determining its color. In my studies of philately, few things have a simple answer.



Steve Ikard's 1856 Dos Reales

Color may not transfer over the internet as mentioned below.

For an example of how many things can be found in just one stamp, I have the stamp pictured above, which a good friend of mine, Steve Ikard, sent me for comments and opinions. It is a Dos Reales from the 1856 issue. Below is what I sent Steve in an email.

"So, this is my opinion. Plate 1 Olive Veracruz. Very lovely stamp with a clerk's fold on the left; no objection because it was not created from a folded cover and is outside the printed image. I know you probably don't like this, but it is a pretty stamp with significant margins. The color is not dark Olive, but I consider it on the deep side of Olive. The Dark Olive, according to Nick, should be almost identical to a dark Army Olive color. Nick also does not have the Dark Olive mentioned for Veracruz. The color also eliminates the stamp from being Plate 2, because that plate does not have any stamps of this color.

Now, for it being plate number 1. If this were on the bottom row of plate 1, as you questioned, it would have a plate line, but the margin is tall; however, it is not outside of the distance between most of the Plate 1 stamps. Additionally, the plate framelines on Plate 1 are closely aligned with the stamp design. Nick lists a price of \$40 for Plate 1 Olive in Veracruz. Since the olive issues are generally lighter than this stamp, and it might be an in-between color, it's worth this or more. Bottom line, I would love to have this in my own collection as a foremost example."

You can see how I tackled this question of what this stamp actually is. 1) I first gave my opinion of the basic stamp subject, including that it had a fold. 2) I then explained what and why it is the color for the issue. 3) Following up next was the answer to Steve's question about whether it was the bottom-row copy with such a large bottom margin. 4) Finally, I gave him an idea of the stamp's value and why it was such a worthy example.

In my future messages, I'll be sure to show you how to conduct a deep search for answers to something you want to learn more about.

Enjoy!

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