

By : Thurston "Bubba" Bland

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Today's Collector  
New Opportunities

Three Steps in Making Good Buys



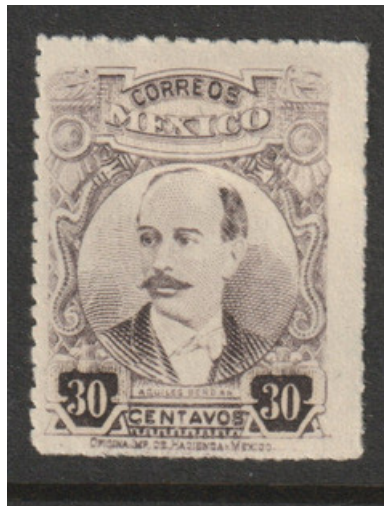
gb01 #2 Un Real Hermosillo / Guaymas Sz 543 in red 20pts F-VF est \$40-60 starts at \$23.50

I was thinking about how collectors and even dealers make good buys for their collections, or how a dealer might pick up an item or items to resell. I was sitting at my desk, and I came up with three things that go into buying Philatelic material. Considering the first might be Appearance, followed by Quality, and ending with Price. For the first part of getting back into stamp collecting, I would go to a few of the dealers left around where I lived, and stamp shows. At the time I was buying USA stamps to fill my old National Album, I was trying to replenish from the stamps I had sold out of it years before. Was I paying much attention to what the stamps looked like? No, I was not. What I was doing was looking at volume buying. I happened upon a dealer whose shop was closed, and although he lacked in volume, he was selling stamps from an old collection he had picked up. His pricing was simple: pick a stamp, and it would be half of the catalog price. I would sit there doing just that while thumbing through a catalog. The only things I checked were the price and if the stamp had a fault.



gb11 #58 6ctv Plate proof t-3 w/o Overprints F-VF est \$50-100 starts at 39.50

As I became more interested in collecting the classic issues of the USA, my attention turned to the 'Three Things to Do'. Appearance was the first down to the basics: "What it looked like." Do I need it, or do I just want it? Then Quality came into play. Was it a nice stamp, free of faults, and did I really still want it? Lastly, if I had decided I wanted it, I would have had to consider the price. So, let's look closer at how these three factors will work for any collector, from the novice to the expert philatelist.



gb22 #640 30ctv Roulette Mint Hinged VF est \$50-100 starts at \$47.50

I certainly learned one more thing: if you side-step any of these three things when you are looking at something to buy, you can get burned or very disappointed. Maybe not all the time, but just enough that you wind up with something you need and certainly do not want. So, Appearance can be really tricky. Outwardly, a stamp may look good, but do you have the want and need together? There is one other thing to remember: the Quality of the material, whether it's just one item or a whole collection. Did you look for fakes, damage, enhancements like added perfs or re-gummed mint items? If it is not original, you have to know this. So, quality is important, and what might make something less desirable is rarely forgiven, unless you know that it is rare and that few items in this class are going to be perfectly centered, untouched, and virgin. Sometimes you might have to accept an item that isn't the best, because the best isn't always possible for some stamps.



gb24 #684-7 2ctv-1Peso Mint hinged VF est \$60-100 starting at \$50.50

Now we come to the last of the big "Three": Price. You have been sitting there at a dealer's table or looking at an auction lot. You have pored over the catalog and even looked up past sales. The number of prices starts to pour out all over the stamp. One catalog says it should sell for \$5, but another one puts the value on something like an Overprint, as in the Mexican Districts. It may show up in that specialized catalog for \$50, not \$5. This is where experience matters, and knowledge is 'King.' There is one rule I have followed as a dealer: they should know what they are selling. I also apply this to myself. So, if that stamp is marked \$10, the quality is there; buy it if you need it. Unbeknownst to the dealer who priced his item at twice the catalog price, he didn't know its real value. Now, if you don't want the stamp after all, point out to him that the stamp is from a better district.



gb25 Airmail C76A Watermark 260 used F-VF Pair est. \$60-100 starting at \$69.50

Now that I have gone through the three most important criteria used when buying material for your collection or as a dealer. Sometimes, you may have to think outside the box. I know everyone wants the best item to fill the empty space in their collection, but passing up a nice example outward with a low price isn't very smart. Why? Because if it is not expensive but still difficult to find, 'A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush'.

Enjoy!

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