

JENNY

The legendary upside-down airplane stamp.

It is the first United States airmail stamp. It is the Inverted Jenny. It is the upside-down airplane stamp. It is Scott #C3a. It is the 1918 24 cent airmail stamp with an inverted center.

It is called several names, but without a doubt, it is the most famous U.S. stamp ever. It is a stamp that many collectors dream about.

This is one of only 100 in existence.



Position 65 owned by the APRL

The sheet of 100 stamps was purchased by Mr. W. T. Robey at a Post Office in Washington DC.

The Inverted Jenny

On May 6, Congress set the rate for airmail postage at 24¢ and authorized the United States Post Office to print stamps to be ready for sale a few days before the official inaugural flight on May 15, 1918.



100 out of two million

Though planes were new and many people had not actually seen any of the new fangled aeroplanes, the War Department and Post Office were both interested in knowing how air service could increase communications. It was the same drive for speed and efficiency that drove the Pony Express, the R.P.O.s, the telegraph, telephone and would later spur the e-mail.

The U.S. Army Air Corp would bring the plane and pilot. The Post Office would bring the mail and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing would provide the country's first air mails stamps. With less than two weeks to go, there was no time to lose and production of the stamps immediately went into high gear. Perhaps it was the sense of national purpose of a country involved in its first modern world war, advanced planning or cutting a few corners, but the U.S.'s first airmail stamps officially went on sale on May 13. Then no one knew that out of some two million stamps there were 100 gems.

Robey

William T. Robey was a stamp collector living in Washington, DC. He had a job as a stockbroker's clerk and on his lunch hour he went to the post office on New York Avenue near 13th Street to buy some of the newly released airmail stamps. An astute stamp collector immediately noticed the major error. Imperforate stamps and upside-down designs have a way of leaping out from the bottoms of cardboard boxes, and Robey's heart stopped when he saw the sheet that the counter clerk put down on the counter for him to look at. Instead of buying a couple of stamps, Robey bought the whole sheet.

Robey told a few friends about the stamps and then went to work, but someone in his office went right over to the P.O. on New York Avenue to buy more of those upside-down airplane stamps. A few hours later postal inspectors were asking Robey to sell the sheet back to them, but he refused. When the inspectors threatened to confiscate the sheet, Robey went home and hid the sheet of Inverted Jennies under his mattress. He knew that official pressure would increase, so he contacted some dealers and sold the sheet of stamps as soon as possible.

Layout of Inverted Jenny Sheet

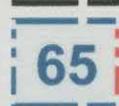
Shown below is a mockup of the Inverted Jenny sheet including the numbers that were written lightly on the back of each stamp by Eugene Klein, the dealer selling the Inverted Jenny sheet on Col. Green's behalf.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12		14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	31		33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48		50
	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
	61	62	63	64	65		67	68	69	70
	71	72	73	74	75		77	78		80
	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98		100
S. De B.										

Legend



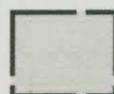
Red number are premium stamps



Displayed in this exhibit



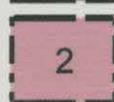
Stamp whereabouts unknown



Thins, hinged, or missing gum



Creased or damage to surface

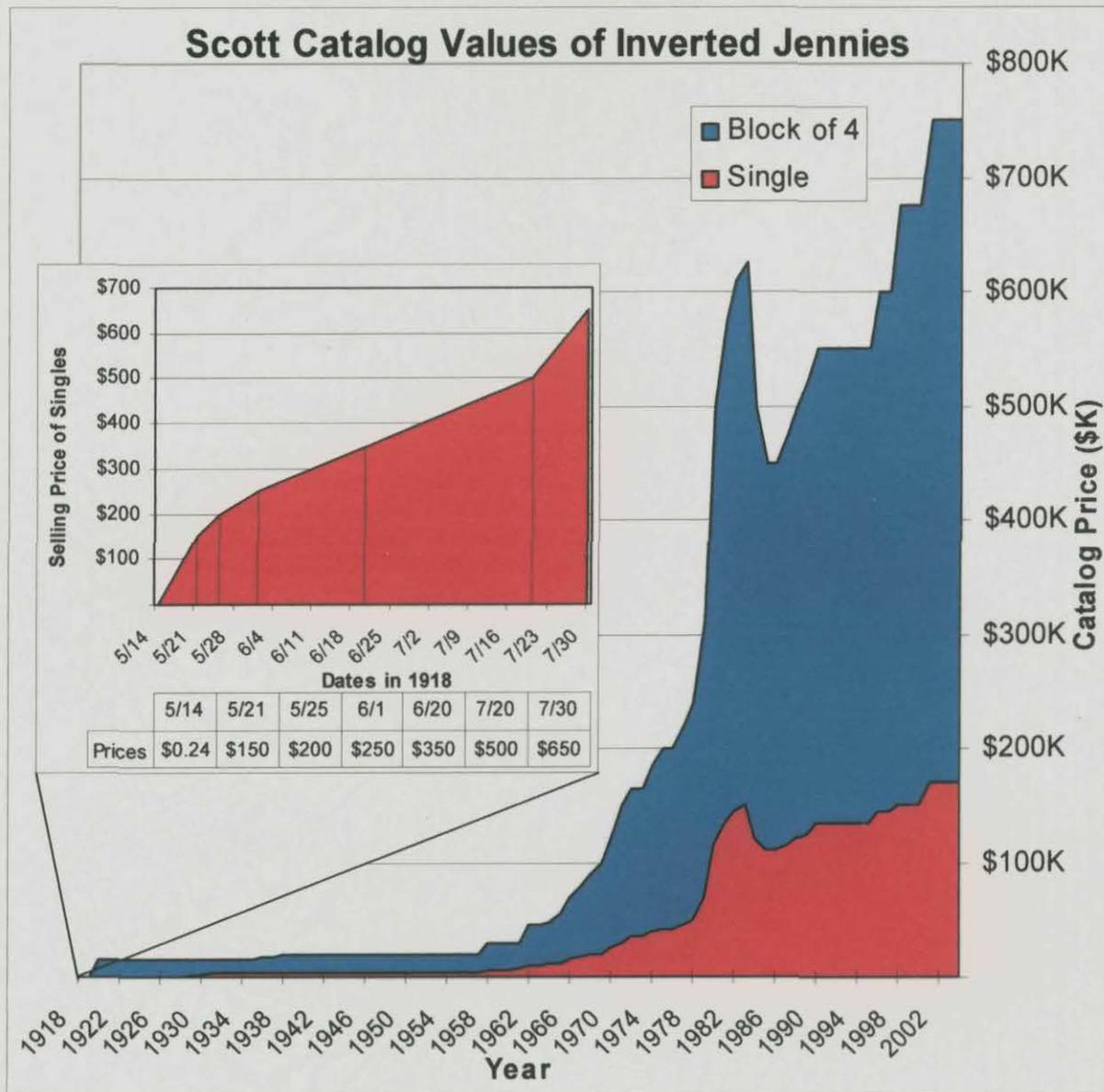


Owned by a public institution

Read below and in the next column some interesting stories about the Inverted Jenny stamps.

Prices and Values of the Inverted Jenny Stamps

Shown below to the left is a blowup of the actual Inverted Jenny prices for the first two and a half months of sales. The larger graph shows Scott's Catalogue prices for both singles and blocks of Inverted Jennies.



Scott's Catalogue values are retail values based on dealer retail price lists, public auction results, published prices in advertising and individual solicitation of retail prices from dealer, collectors and specialty organizations.

The Inverted Jenny
Legend and Joke

Nineteen Straight-Edged Inverted Jennies Stuck Together in an Envelope!

They had to be soaked apart.

All nineteen of the straight-edge stamps from the top and right side of the Inverted Jenny sheet were kept in Colonel Green's possession. During his lifetime, Green sold only the more desirable perforated varieties.

In 1942, six years after his death, Green's stamps were sent to auction. At that time, an envelope of stuck-together straight-edge Inverted Jennies were discovered. In order to preserve the stamps, the auctioneer, Walter Scott, soaked off all the gum on the straight-edge inverts.

There was a popular story at the time that Colonel Green had brought his straight-edges to a club meeting where it was his intention to burn them in front of witnesses so none of the stamps could be re-perfed at a later time and passed off as fully perforated examples. Fortunately, the membership talked him out of this drastic move. Like other tales, some started by Colonel Green himself, this story cannot be authenticated.



A joke of the period from Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News, June 29, 1918 written by A.N. Reggie.

The following conversation was overheard in the office of a Boston dealer:

Customer - "Say, I would like to own one of the inverted aeroplane stamps."

Dealer - "I can sell you one."

Customer - "Can't afford to buy it now."

Dealer - "I'll sell you one on margin."

Customer (seriously) - "No, I want it well centered."

The Inverted Jenny

Edward Green

Reportedly Robey got \$15,000 from Klein, who then turned around and sold the sheet for \$20,000 to Colonel Edward Green, a New York stamp dealer and son of Hetty Green, who was the legendary "Witch of Wall Street."

In Green's hands in New York the sheet of Inverted Jennies within weeks blossomed into the Taj Mahal of stamps, the Fort Knox of collecting, the Mona Lisa of timbromanie, and the Holy Grail of philately. Green broke up the sheet and sold single stamps and blocks of four to his friends. The sheet of 100 Inverted Jennies was actually a pane of 100 stamps cut from a full press run sheet of 400. Robey's stamps were the lower left-hand pane of the press sheet and was cut from the full sheet with a straight edge. That meant that a certain amount of stamps didn't have perforations all around, but instead had straight-edge cuts as they were on the outer edges.



The sheet was laid out 10 stamps wide and 10 stamps top-to-bottom. Nine stamps had straight-edge tops, and nine had straight-edges on their right-hand side. One stamp, from the upper right-hand corner, had no perfs on top or on the right-hand side. That leaves just 81 fully perforated stamps. Today, each stamp of the original 100 is known by its plate position, e.g. #86 or #21, and the fate of each is watched closely. See layout graphic of the sheet in the next column.

Inverted Jenny Facts

Green sold the first ten stamps for \$250 each and then raised the price to \$350. Soon his price was at \$650. Green did not sell the straight-edge stamps and put these in a safe where over a period of time, they became stuck together.

Seven of the Inverted Jennies have been reported destroyed or lost in one way or another over the years and many more have been the victim of improper handling and storage. Also, hinges have damaged the gum and caused thins. Some have creases and others are toned showing that they have been in contact with acidic paper for long periods of time.

The Inverted Jenny
Legends and Anecdotes



Stolen from Stamp Show

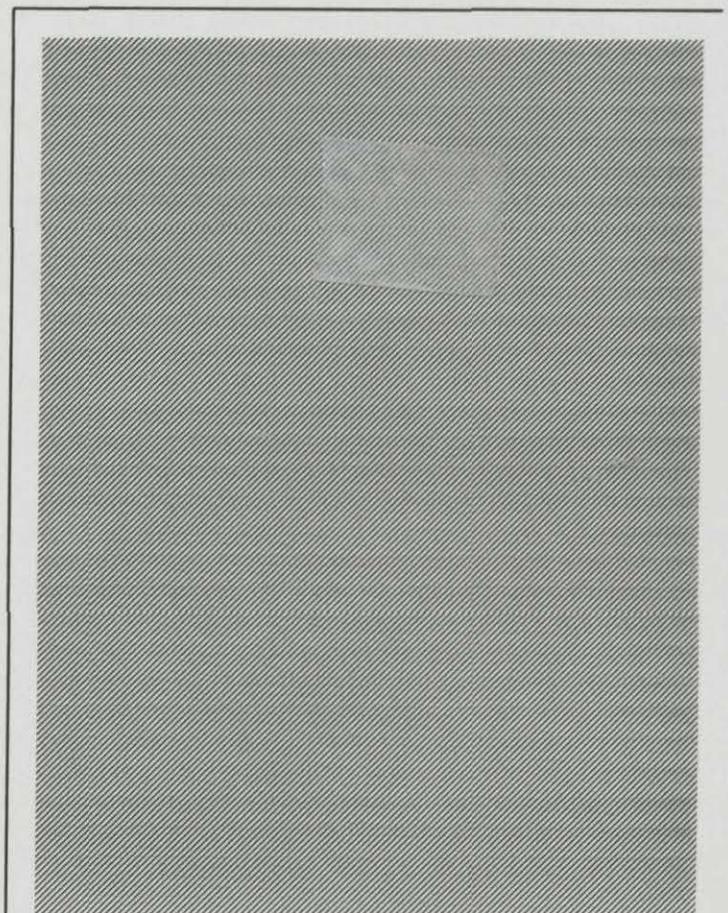
In 1936, Ethel B. Steward (later McCoy) purchased the block of Inverted Jennies. For nearly 20 years, Ethel exhibited her block of Inverted Jennies. In Sept. 1955, at the request of the American Philatelic Society officials, Ethel lent them her block. As always, Ethel's block drew an appreciative audience.

At the opening of the third day of the show, it was noticed that Ethel's album page was blank. The burglar had cut a piece of rope that bound together two display frames. Then slid the Inverted Jenny frame back from the covered glass and removed the block.

On July 18, 1958, an Inverted Jenny showed up for sale. The FBI identified the stamp as the "real McCoy" position 75. The FBI was powerless to act since the stamp was valued at \$3,000 and the federal law on the interstate movement of stolen property did not apply unless the item was worth at least \$5,000. In 1977, the stamp was sent to the Philatelic Foundation for certification of its authenticity. The purchaser was willing to pay \$16,000 for the stamp. Because of the rise in price, the FBI could now act.

In Jan. 1980, Ethel McCoy, now 85 years old, in poor health, assigned all her rights, title and interest in her stolen block to the American Philatelic Research Library (APRL) in State College, PA. On Jan. 30, 1981, the court awarded the stamp to the APRL. The stamp was then placed in the Sept. 25, 1981 sale. With the proceeds the APRL created an endowment fund whose income would help support the library's operations.

On Nov. 19, 1982, position 65 was identified when a collector made an offer to donate the stamp to the APRL. The collector stated having purchased the stamp previous to 1974. The stamp in this exhibit is position 65. The two remaining stamps, positions 66 and 76, have not surfaced as of 2004.





Keepsake for Eternity

At one time Colonel Green had possession of all 100 Inverted Jennies. At some point, he created a locket for his

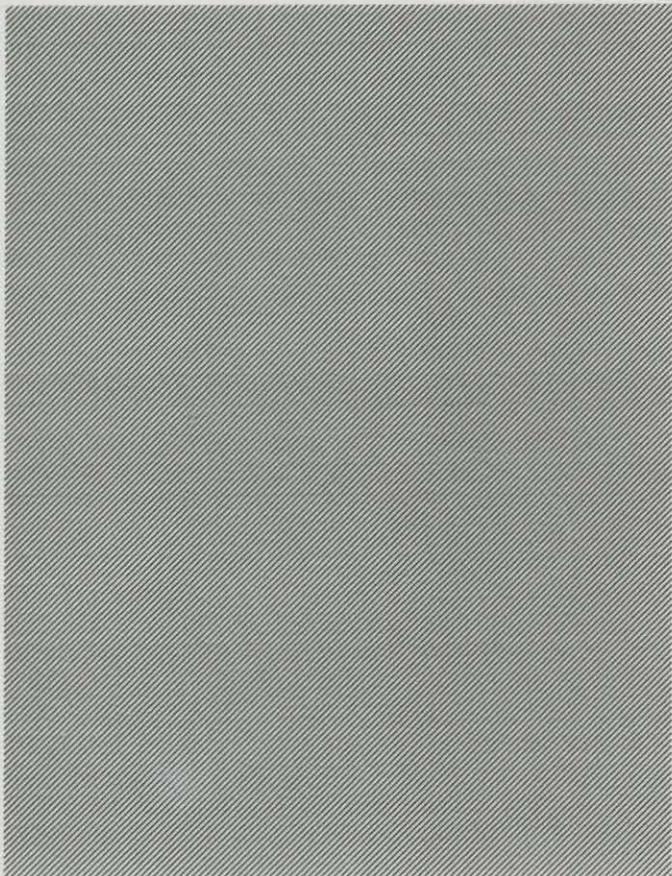
The Inverted Jenny Legends and Anecdotes

wife, Mabel Harlow Green. Both an Inverted Jenny and a mint Jenny were placed back-to-back and sealed inside transparent glass with a gold rim. This locket did not surface until June 1950, when George B. Sloane was asked to appraise a philatelic item held in a Manhattan bank. The item belonged to Mabel Green who died in April 1949. The locket was offered at Siegel Auctions in their May 2002 Rarity Sale but no bids were accepted. It was later sold privately.



World War II Wounded

On Sept. 24, 1940, during the Battle of Britain, German Luthwaffe bombers raided central London and fires arose. The Inverted Jenny owned by John Crichton-Stuart, was stored at the Chancery Lane Safe Depository. After the bombing, three feet of water stood in the Chancery Lane storage room, immersing the albums. When the room was finally entered a month later, the inverted Jenny had lost its gum but was otherwise unharmed.





The New York Public Library



Stolen While on Public Display

On Feb. 16, 1925, Benjamin Miller, an avid stamp collector, gave his entire collection of U.S. postage stamps to the New York Public Library. Miller's intent was to have it "exhibited to the public for the purpose of instruction and pleasure." Miller continued to add rare items to the library collection until his death three years later.

Keeping with Miller's wishes, parts of his collection were prominently displayed on the first floor of the library in an oak display cabinet. But on May 9, 1977, a burglar removed the transparent plastic covers from the recessed cabinets taking 153 items including the Inverted Jenny.

In 1978, this stamp appeared with a top straight edge and was misidentified as position 9, the only straight edge position whose whereabouts was unknown. (See locket for story of position 9.) When the stamp went for auction on May 5, 1979, Clifford C. Cole Jr. and Calvert M Hahn, long time students of the Inverted Jenny, concluded using image position and corner perforations that the stamp was not position 9.

The Inverted Jennies Institutionally Owned

It was not until 1982 when Daniel M. Bagby photographically attempted to recreate the original sheet, that the stamp was identified beyond question to be position 18. The stamp was then secured by the FBI and returned to the NYPL on July 8, 1986 with 80 other stolen stamps.

The Inverted Jenny is currently not on display at the New York Public Library. Plans are being made to digitalized all of Miller's collection so that everyone will have the pleasure of seeing his rare stamps.



The Franklin Institute



By Appointment

Upon Harry L. Jefferys' death in 1948, his stamp collection was donated to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. The Inverted Jenny was on display for the public to see for many years exposing it to harmful sunlight. The stamp, now somewhat faded, is in storage and can be seen by appointment only.



Jenny No. 38262 never completed the first airmail flight from Washington, D.C. because of pilot incompetence and associated blunders.

between Washington and New York. They were delivered to Long Island, unassembled in crates, some in very poor quality. The mechanics worked around the clock to prepare the planes for the first epic transfer of mail. Bad engines were encountered, leaks in gas tanks, fuselage wires were broken, safety valves inoperative, some control wires were either too short or too long.

Finally, the planes were located at strategic points along the planned route for a Northbound and a Southbound flight for May 15th, 1918. The airmail would eventually be relayed, pony express style, with one stop near Philadelphia. They hoped to beat the train by two hours. The Southbound route from New York was completed with only a few problems, and Lieutenant James Edgerton landed in Washington with 2,457 letters and only 20 minutes late.



Lieutenant Edgerton

The Northbound plane, No 38262, like on the stamp, was in trouble right from the very beginning. Initially, the plane would not start, until it was discovered that the gas tank was empty. There was no gas supply available, and it was necessary to siphon gas from another plane. Once airborne, the pilot, Lieutenant Boyle, headed in the wrong direction. Hopelessly lost, while trying to land the pilot eventually crashed in a field resting the plane upside down. Can you imagine, an upside down Jenny? It was ironic that the same number 38262 is on the Jenny stamps.

Days later, when the plane was repaired, he tried to fly from Washington again, but became disoriented, ran out of gas and crashed, tearing off the wings. Jenny No. 38262 had to be mostly rebuilt, but returned to the airmail service support team of the Post Office in August of 1918.

“Those Daring Young Men
in Their Flying Machines”

The First Airmail Flights.

**Not Exactly Without
Multiple Incidents.**

The Inverted Jenny Legends and Anecdotes



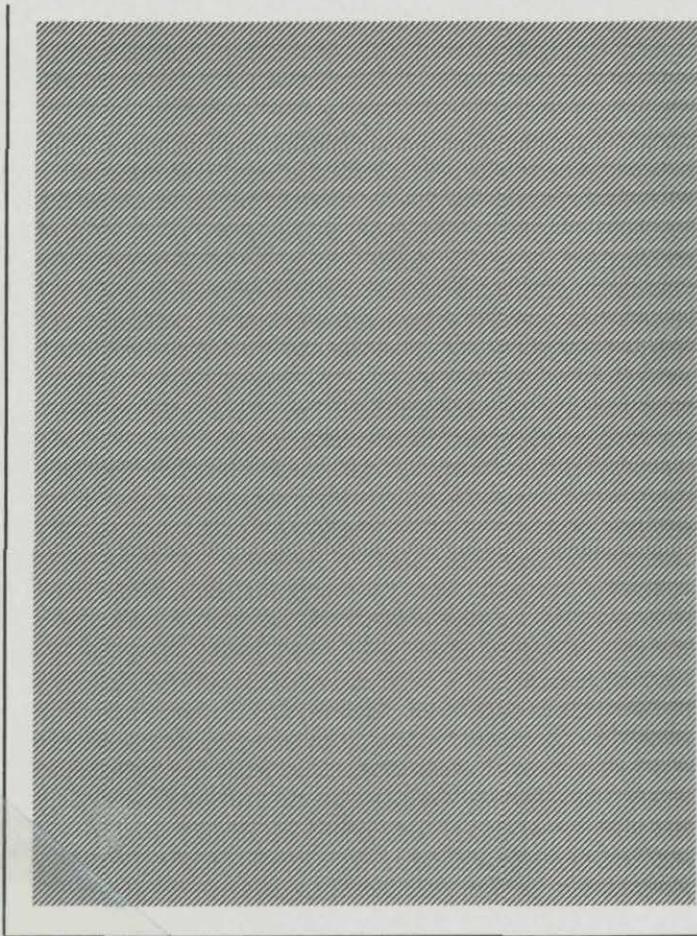
Insider Job

An Inverted Jenny was reported stolen on Feb. 7, 1959, while it awaited sale at the Shanahan's Stamp Auctions, Ltd. in Dublin, Ireland. But the same stamp was listed by the auction house in their May 23 auction. Then on May 9, 1959, while directors, Paul and Irma Singer, held a huge stamp party, Shanahan was broken into and a large number of stamps awaiting auction including the Inverted Jenny were stolen. The stamps, which were said to have been worth \$1.2M, turned out not to have been insured. On May 23, 1959, the auction house directors voted to liquidate the firm.

Singer was accused of paying dividends to investors of money from new investors, while faking many of the stamp auction sales that were ostensibly generating the profits. Meanwhile Singer was transferring more than \$2M to his credit in banks in Switzerland and elsewhere, supposedly for stamp purchases. The jury found him guilty of "fraudulent conversion" of investor money into old investors' profits and a sentence of 14 years in prison was stipulated.

Singer appealed the verdict and in a second trial was found not guilty on a technical failure of the prosecution to prove specific instances of conversion. Singer and his wife were still on trail for bankruptcy, when he fled the country and has never been seen again.

In Oct. 1961, authorities recovered \$850,000 worth of Shanahan stamps which were in the hands of a Greek man in Geneva. No charges were brought against the man but indications were made that it was the work of an insider.





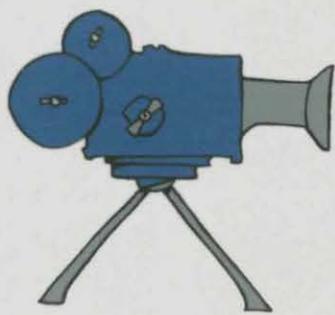
The Inverted Jenny Legends and Anecdotes

Keeping it Clean



Written in Dec. 18, 1989 Linn's Stamp News, an Inverted Jenny owner had been

browsing through his U.S. hingeless album, when the airmail invert must have slipped out of its mount onto the floor. Two days later, the owner again looked through his album and noticed that the invert was missing. A frantic search for the stamp discovered it in the contents of the vacuum's dust bag that the maid had used to clean the room. The stamp was severely damaged. The owner's response to the loss, "Thank goodness it's something I can replace."



In the Movies

The Inverted Jenny inspired many movies to be made like film thriller *Death Under the Lilacs* from Richard Forrest's Lyon Wentworth Mystery Series. Also, comedy *Brewster's Millions* where Brewster uses an Inverted Jenny to pay the first class rate to mail a postcard. To understand why Brewster did it, you will either have to read George Barr McCutcheon's novel or see one of five screen adaptations (1914, 1921, 1935, 1945, and 1985).



24c Inverted Jenny Replica

Inverted Frame

Owing to the printing method employed for the printing of the Jenny, it was the frame that was inverted. It appears that the frame sheet was misfed before receiving the airplane printing. This was also the case with the earlier errors of the bi-colored issues. The term "center inverted" has always been used and continues to be used.

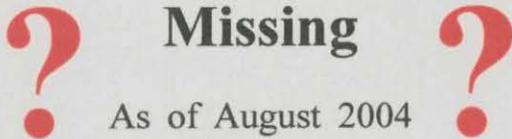


Smithsonian
National Postal Museum



Under Motion-sensor Lighting

On Dec. 23, 1957, Raymond H. Weill Company donated an Inverted Jenny to the Smithsonian Museum, in Washington, DC. The Inverted Jenny may be seen by appointment only. Entry is free. Please contact the Smithsonian National Postal Museum to schedule a time (202) 633-5525.



Missing

As of August 2004 the whereabouts of positions 13, 32, 49, 66, 76, 79, 99 are unknown.

Princeton University



Former Owner

In 1947, the block was given to Princeton by the widow of Edgar Palmer. The University never put the block on display and finally sold it on June 8, 1976 to Raymond H. Weill for \$170,000.

The Inverted Jennies
Institutionally Owned

Coe College
1851



College Display

In 1967, Ellen Douglas Williamson gave her airmail stamp collection of 75 volumes to Coe College. Even though the Inverted Jenny was creased it still drew viewers when the college exhibited it. Later the trustees decided to sell the stamp on Jan. 7, 1977 for \$23,000.



Bureau Proofs

On May 3, 1922, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing printed two die proofs of the Inverted Jenny error, in the original colors, for exhibitions and record purposes. One was given to the Smithsonian to complete the Post Office Department's exhibit of die proofs. The second was placed in the album of die proofs kept as part of the official record by the Division of Stamps.

Later, other proofs were created for worldwide exhibitions. The actual number produced is not known.

The Inverted Jenny on 1973 Souvenir Card



Official souvenir sheets were issued in 1973, one of them depicted the Inverted Jenny on a card to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Aero Philatelic Club of London and the international airmail exhibition held July 4-7 at Manchester, England, APEX 73. Three rare airmail stamps were depicted including the Inverted Jenny. It is curious that the name "Curtiss" was misspelled.

INTERNATIONAL AIRMAIL EXHIBITION APEX 73

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND

JULY 4-7, 1973



This souvenir card is issued in compliment to the 50th anniversary of the Aero Philatelic Club of London, and its Exhibition at Manchester APEX 73. Depicted on the card is the United States 24-cent airmail stamp of 1918 showing the Curtiss "Jenny" vignette inverted. On the left of this stamp is the rare De Pinedo Newfoundland airmail of 1927; and on the right the very rare Honduras airmail surcharge of 1925.

E. T. Keason

Postmaster General

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Souvenir card produced by the United States Postal Service for APEX 73.

The Jenny on Souvenir Card

1973 marked the 50th anniversary of the American Air Mail Society and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. On September 14-16, they issued a Jenny souvenir card for NAPEX '73 in Washington to commemorate the event. The original stamp dies were used by the Bureau to reproduce a block of four of the normal 24¢ Jenny, with the plane in the proper orientation. The denominations and lettering have been removed, as is customary with the Bureau issued souvenir cards.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
BUREAU OF ENGRAVING AND PRINTING
WASHINGTON, D.C.



Devoted to the airmail theme, this souvenir card depicts reproductions of the engraved vignette and frame used in printing the first airmail stamp issued by the United States Government. The central design of the stamp, produced in the 24¢ denomination, pictured the type of army airplane which carried mail on this Nation's first airmail route established in May 1918. The stamp became widely known as the consequence of the discovery of one sheet on which the airplane had been printed in the inverted position.

Flanking the block on the right is a conception of the airplane created by the designer of the card. Emblazoned on its side are background tints of replicas of the three stamps issued in 1923 in connection with the inauguration of night flying service across the country. Night flights were adopted in order to make airmail service more efficient and to prove that it definitely was a time saving process.

NAPEX '73

25TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL PHILATELIC EXHIBITION

50TH ANNIVERSARY AMERICAN AIR MAIL SOCIETY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SEPTEMBER 14-16

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Issued by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing for NAPEX '73.
(Facsimile)

The Inverted Jenny on 1982 Souvenir Card

Once again, the United States Postal Service produced a souvenir card showing the Inverted Jenny, slightly larger than the original issue. The card celebrated the occasion of the National Stamp Collecting Month in October 1982, which the U.S.P.S. sponsored in cooperation with the Council of Philatelic Organizations. The name "Curtiss" was spelled correctly on this card.



NATIONAL STAMP COLLECTING MONTH 1982



The U.S. Postal Service is pleased to issue this souvenir card in honor of the second annual observance of National Stamp Collecting Month in October 1982, which is conducted in cooperation with the Council of Philatelic Organizations.

Stamp collecting engages the mind. The study of stamps, their thoughtful acquisition and display, the sharing of information about them, and organizing, attending and participating in stamp exhibitions stimulate a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Because *people of every age can find pleasure in these activities*, stamp collecting is indeed "the hobby of a lifetime."

We have chosen for reproduction on this souvenir card a stamp which has captured the imagination of philatelists everywhere. It is the 1918 Curtiss Jenny 24-cent Air Mail stamp with an inverted center. The error occurred during printing when a sheet was fed to the press facing in the wrong direction, resulting in the airplane appearing to fly upside-down. Only one pane of 100 stamps escaped detection and was placed on public sale. The pane was purchased on May 14, 1918 from a branch of the Washington, D.C., post office.



© UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE 1982

William F. Bolger
Postmaster General

Souvenir card produced by the United States Postal Service to celebrate the National Stamp Collecting Month in 1982.

All Blocks of 4



24¢ Inverted Jenny Block of 4 Replica

From May 22 to June 1, 1986, all 6 existing blocks of the Inverted Jennies were displayed at the great international stamp show, AMERIPEX '86, held in Chicago. At the Weill Company booth were the left arrows [41-2,51-2], [43-4,53-4], center line [45-6,55-6], [81-2,91-2] and plate number blocks [87-8,97-8], the last three were on loan from their owners; the Princeton block [61-2,71-2] was shown by its owner, dealer Kenneth Wenger. Also, on display or offered for sale by dealers, were twelve single Inverted Jennies.

This event will never occur again since one block had been separated. The block [41-2,51-2] is now a set of horizontal pairs each with their respective selvage and half arrow. The center guideline is visible on the upper pair [41-2].

Reference Sources

Amick, George. The Inverted Jenny: Money, Mystery, Mania. Sidney, Ohio: Amos Press, 1986.

Special thanks goes to the following groups for their information for this exhibit: Smithsonian Postal Museum, Siegel Auctions, Franklin Institution, and New York Public Library.

Thanks to many Journals and the internet for bits of information too numerous to mention.

And thanks to Kristin Patterson and Leonard Holmsten who compiled this work into seventeen pages for your pleasure.