

# San Jose Stamp Club

APS Chapter 0264-025791

Founded 1927, Club show since 1928

January 2024

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## Filatellic Fiesta 2023

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### Club Blog

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### Filatellic Fiesta Website

[www.filatellicfiesta.com](http://www.filatellicfiesta.com)

### Correspondence:

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981 Shadow Brook Dr.  
San Jose, CA 95120



the San Jose Stamp  
Club on Facebook

# HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024!

I hope that everyone's holidays were pleasant and un-eventful. I was blessed with my youngest stepdaughter and my 3 Chinese granddaughters coming to visit all of July and August. My wife was in China from November 22 to December 22 so my oldest stepdaughter came to stay with me all of November and December. My wife does not like the idea of me being alone because of the health scares the past few years. Getting to see everyone was very special. My oldest stepdaughter is fascinated by stamps and spent the whole day with me at Filatellic Fiesta. It is a long drive from Sacramento but Fiesta was worth the drive.

It appears that the club had a good year in 2023 inspite of several challenges. We didn't lose anyone in 2023 and instead added some new members. That's a real positive. I will be updating the calendar on our website over the next few weeks so check it out for upcoming shows and events. Brian has some great ideas for the club and could use some help. We are first and foremost a social club and a lot of the activities he has suggested are social in nature. It has been awhile since we had a summer picnic or a Christmas dinner. None of the projects we do is rocket science. Just a series of simple tasks. Let's endeavor to make 2024 even better than 2023. There is nothing we can't do if we pull together.

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## Club Blog & Website

**Blog Updates** No Activity

### Website Updates

December 2023 Newsletter uploaded

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## Remember the dates!

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## President's Message

### January 2024

It's been an incredible year for the SJSC. We pulled off hosting Filatelic Fiesta despite a greatly diminished leadership team. Several new members have joined this year and we helped host a multi-club social event. The year had it's challenges with several active members having health and family issues that kept them from participating at their typical level. Nevertheless, let's plan for an even bigger and better year in 2024!

It is my goal to develop the club in a couple of ways. I'd like to grow the club in numbers and be relevant to both new and experienced collectors. Success at any of these things is dependent on club member support and participation.

**Growing the club:** We need to be more pro-active in recruiting and not just leaving it doing it at Fiesta. The event on the club's agenda is a family event at the Pearl Ave Library. The leaders at this branch are very supportive of our club meeting and give us the room at no charge. They very much want us to host a program at the library. We have agreed to target doing this on a Saturday afternoon in March. The program will be promoted by library as being for kids and we will offer stamp programs for kids. However, the kids will be coming with a parent, and it is my goal that our presentation is as much for the

parents as it is for the kids. It is my goal to put together a presentation that focuses on how to have fun and be creative. It is my goal that those in attendance will find this message engaging and something they will want to get involved with. Also, just getting this program promoted will put our club info in front of a lot of library patrons. I'm optimistic that this visibility will help us bring visitors to our meetings. Once we have a good presentation, we can be more proactive about offering to give presentations at service clubs, libraries, and senior centers in the hopes of recruiting new members. I'd LOVE to have a collection to "show and tell" that uses creativity to demonstrate that collecting doesn't have to use the traditional album. As long as one learns how to properly handle and preserve philatelic items, one can be let their creativity grow and make a collection that reflects their interests and personality.

**Inter-Club Social Events:** It can only help our efforts to grow and develop our personal collections if we build the strength of the philatelic community in the area. I see this having value in a couple of ways. Let's say you've got an issue with UV tagging on a stamp, and nobody here in the SJSC can help you...well Peter Adams in the Sequoia Club is an expert on UV tagging. Perhaps someone with needs help with a tough question on UK stamps, maybe our member Adam Smith can advise them. One might suggest just distributing lists of specialties, and that is good. Wouldn't it be even better if we actually knew each other? OR, you have a special item you'd like to buy or sell. Having a larger community to sell or buy from can only help. OR, you'd like to start a local chapter of national philatelic society. Again, being friends with a larger network of philatelists can be critical aid. Therefore, it my goal that the SJSC host an inter-club meeting later this spring and this will need your support.

**Just For Fun:** Who can use a little more fun in their lives? The pandemic put a hold on a lot of things, but that is well enough under control that I believe it is safe for us to plan events just for the fun of it. A summer picnic? ...a winter party? A bunch of us love antique airplanes, how about a trip to Castle Air Museum? Got another idea? Speak up!

**Repeated question:** who is going to step-up to lead Filatelic Fiesta in 2024?

*Brian*

## Bits and Pieces

**DUES:** A big thank you to those who've sent in their dues! For those who lost track of this during the busy holiday season, it's time to get this checked off your "To Do" list.

Dues remain at only \$12 per year. Sharing time with a group of people who share your interest in stamps is worth it. If all you do is take advantage of our inventory of stamps and discount on mounts, you'd save more than the dues. There are plenty of activities planned for the coming year that will make this a wonderful investment. Do you have some ideas on what you'd like the club to do in 2024? Speak up! Please send a check by January 31st made out to: "San Jose Stamp Club"

Brian Jones  
981 Shadow Brook Dr.  
San Jose, CA 95120

**Finger Prints:** To host the program planned at the SJ Library, anyone working with youth must be fingerprinted by the San Jose Police. We need to follow the rules to keep everyone safe. It won't cost you anything, so don't worry about that. It is essential that a few of us get this done. Please contact me ASAP if you're willing to help and, consequently, get fingerprinted.

**Exhibit Frames:** There is no change on the status of our exhibit frames. The WESTPEX Committee finally replied, but their proposal of cherry-picking some of our better frames doesn't make any sense to me. No deal has been made with Boston.

## Advent Craft Fair

Written by Brian Jones

On Sunday December 3<sup>rd</sup>, I hosted a stamp collecting room at the Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos's Advent Craft Fair. It focuses on having participants build a Christmas stamp collection using the two APS albums: "Santa" and "Madona and Child". The guests sift through bins of the appropriate US issued Christmas stamps and mount them in the album using an acid-free temporary gum dispenser.



I've done this for many years and

For our youngest participants, some coloring pages and crayons are available. I found some special pages made for coloring based on popular stamp images. This gives them something to do while their older siblings work on building an album.

Another option for guests is to make a page of stamps from Christmas Around the World and mount them on a world map. It is hoped that by offering different options, the room won't become too repetitive for guests who come year over year.

A popular item to look at is my fellow stamp collecting member of the church Jim Stoner complete collection of Christmas Seals. It is really interesting to see how these have evolved over the years.

I got several reports from parents and young people that they look forward to doing these stamp projects. Two guests arrived with Christmas stamp albums from last year but not able to complete. They brought them in and got to look for the stamps they previously missed.

After Christmas, a dad let me know his daughter showed her stamp album to the whole family that had gathered for the holiday. She is very excited about collecting and looking forward to continuing to collect. The dad is going to call and we'll make an appointment to facilitate her continuing to collect.

Join us at the Library in Redwood City:

## Open House and Sale!

Saturday, February 17, 2024 Doors Open 9am

This event will feature **Duplicate Books at 50% off**, **“Buy-It Now” tables**, **\$5 Mystery Boxes** and **Nickel-a-Stamp Table!**

Priced to Go! Checks and Cash Accepted.



Friends of the Western Philatelic Library, Inc.

3004 Spring Street (@ 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue), Redwood City

Telephone: 650-306-9150 Questions? [info@fwpl.org](mailto:info@fwpl.org)



## Third Party and Numerical Grading of Stamps

Most stamp collectors pay careful attention to the condition of their stamps. One of the first lessons is that a sound stamp is preferable to a damaged stamp; it follows for most collectors that a well-centered stamp beats an off-centered stamp, that color and intact perforations matter, and so on. Stamps in better condition are worth more than the same stamp in lesser condition; it's a simple market force.

The hobby developed a straightforward nomenclature for stamp condition decades ago – fine, very fine, extremely fine – and some additional terms have appeared across that spectrum (very good, fine/very fine, superb). These terms have been widely used in stamp dealer price lists, at auction, at shows, and online.

Only relatively recently (starting after 2000) and primarily in the area of United States material, has numerical grading by expert services become a part of philately. Accordingly, this article is directed to United States stamps (though at least one service will grade Canadian stamps and there is some history of grading U.S. possessions material and sometimes other international stamps).

In the parlance of this article, a “graded” stamp has been submitted to a recognized expertizing service (for example, the Philatelic Foundation (PF), Professional Stamp Experts (PSE), or Philatelic Stamp Authentication and Grading (PSAG), certified as authentic, and given a numerical grade from 10 to 100 based on its condition.

Stamps may also in some instances be “slabbed” or “encapsulated” – encased in a plastic holder – to prevent changes in condition and for convenience in handling. PSE started to discontinue slabbing due to supply constraints and low demand in 2021.

The American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX) does NOT grade or slab stamps.

Graded stamps are now widely available in the marketplace, offered in dealer stocks, online, and in public auctions.

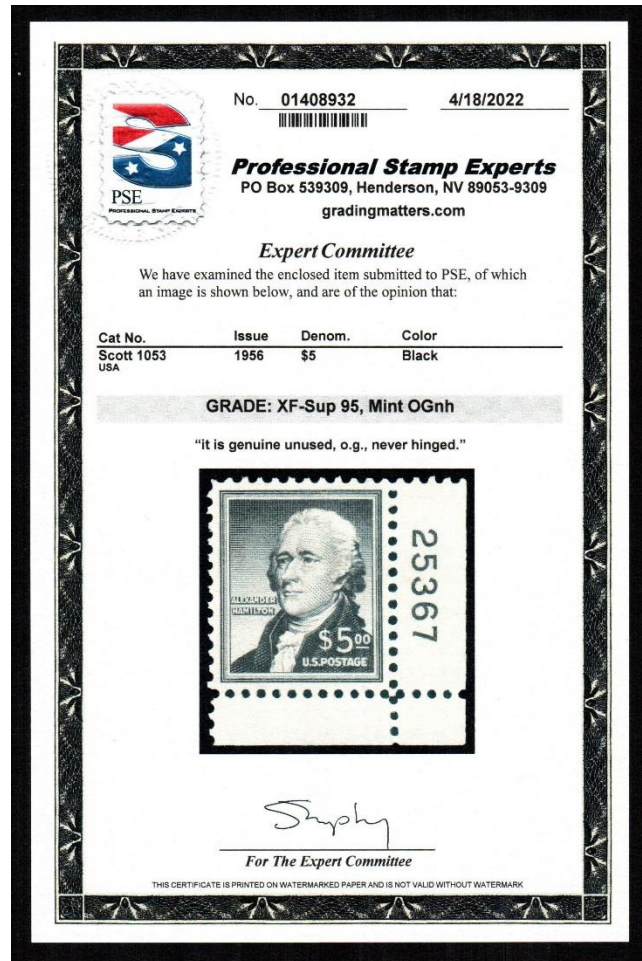


Figure 1. A 2022 certificate with a grade of 95 from Professional Stamp Experts for the \$5 Alexander Hamilton stamp (Scott 1053) of 1956. (Images courtesy of APS StampStore.)

The practice of a single numerical grade for a collectible started with coins, where numerical grading and “slabbing” has been commonplace since the 1980s. In the comparatively liquid coin market, many U.S. coins now have a “sight unseen” market – where dealers will buy and sell graded coins at set prices without even seeing the coins themselves, all based on reliance on the certified grade.

Grading has not met with the same acceptance in the stamp marketplace, and I think for good reason.

To reach a single “net” grade for a stamp, a grading service must consider multiple factors: generally speaking, soundness and condition. Each grading service offers details on their process, which generally involves assessing the centering of a stamp, with point deductions for faults.

PSAG states on its web page that “[t]he most important and easiest to understand element of grading is the relative centering of a stamp.” The PF, by contrast, describes grading, saying “[t]he Foundation will assign a number to a stamp which gives our evaluation of a stamp’s centering, margins and overall condition.” PSAG states more generally that “[o]ur evaluation averages most of these effects to get an overall determination acceptable to the vast majority of collectors.”

Some services also allow for additional adjustments. For example, PSE uses “eye appeal” as a third component, incorporating color, impression, freshness and, for used stamps, cancellation. Each service has its own criteria and its own formula for reaching a single net grade.

Adding to the complexity, some of the expertizing services will not grade stamps with certain faults or problems (for example, PSAG will not grade reperforated stamps), and in some cases, marginal markings (such as a guideline appearing in the perforations of a stamp) may be taken into consideration. Different graders may also treat different stamp issues differently, for example, the 1857 issue, which generally has narrow margins.

This is all a long way of saying that not all stamps in a given numerical grade are equal for any given collector. The “net grade” system creates the prospect of a poorly centered but faultless stamp being treated equally to a well-centered but faulty stamp.

Individual collectors may have widely varying opinions on the severity of specific faults and their impact on a stamp’s condition (and, by extension, value). For example, a collector may not worry much about short perf but be very sensitive about thin spots, or vice versa. Accordingly, I recommend always carefully examining graded stamps for faults, just to ensure that your own individual preferences are met.

One premise of a single “net” grade for a stamp is for pricing purposes. PSE publishes “Stamp Market Quarterly,” which prices various U.S. stamps in different states (used, no gum, previously hinged, never hinged) in different graded conditions. The Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps includes values for certain stamps by numerical grade in a catalog supplement.

PSE also makes available on its website a “population guide” that tracks the number of stamps that PSE has graded at each specific grade. The reports can be a guide to the relative preponderance of a stamp in a certain grade, and how many higher-graded examples can be found. Of course, given that grading is not nearly as prevalent in stamps as it is in coins, the population report may not be a truly reliable indicator.

This said, the grading services also promote that net grades help facilitate comparison of stamps and provide guideline information. The PF, for example, states that “[t]he Foundation’s goal in grading stamps is to provide collectors and dealers with objective information about stamps” and that the use of numerical grading “allows collectors and dealers to easily compare stamps of the



same or differing grades within the same issue,” allowing a collector or dealer to “make intelligent choices and comparisons among stamps.”

Collectors buying or selling graded stamps, or considering submitting stamps for grading, should take the time to read the guides and literature offered by the expertizing entities to ensure that they understand the nuances of the grading process and procedure. Many dealers will not guarantee that an ungraded stamp will receive a specific grade; auction houses will frequently not accept returns of stamps if they receive a graded certificate with a number lower than found on an existing certificate or in an item description.

At root, I recommend treating numerical grading as a guideline, not as gospel. In other words, “buy the stamp, not the grade.”

Grading does provide some comfort or confirmation of the relative condition of a stamp, and, of course, graded stamps are also by definition expertized stamps. Grading comes at a significant financial cost: graded certificates for stamps cost at least \$20 for more recent stamps and can cost much more for more valuable or classic material (frequently 5 to 5.5 percent of the catalog value). For this reason, graded stamps tend to focus on the highest grades and the most expensive underlying stamps. Because of the numerous individual factors at play, each collector should make their own assessment of a graded stamp and determine their interest (and the value to them) of the stamp on its own merits.

## Grading Resources

Here is a guide to find grading information from three philatelic expertizers:

Professional Stamp Experts’ “[A Guide to Grading and Expertizing United States Stamps](#)”

Philatelic Stamp Authentication and Grading’s discussion of “[Grading Stamps](#)”

The Philatelic Foundation’s [discussion of grading](#) and “[Grading Manual](#)”

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# San Jose Stamp Club

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