

So -- you looking at online stamp auctions...?

by Mike Cryer

With the advent of numerous online sales platforms AND COVID19 this year... it is no surprise that many folks are turning to the Internet to fill their philatelic needs. Personally... I am constantly combing the Internet for additions to my US Classics collection. The other day I inquired of a seller as to the specifics of a certain listed stamp and found myself in a discussion regarding what does and does not work in buying/selling stamps online. Granted... I am not a philatelic expert and am always learning but I thought it worthwhile to share some things that I have come to realize when “shopping” online auctions. So here are my suggestions:

- 1) Know what you are looking for. If you are looking for a 519... does the picture match what that stamp should look like. Be careful... there can be subtle differences that a careful collector should be aware of.
- 2) Do not be afraid to ask for additional photos. I have done so on numerous occasions and that has helped me avoid pitfalls and gain an edge on certain listings.
- 3) Review the seller. What feedback do they have? Are there significant adverse feedbacks noted? Are they an established seller? Have they been selling stamps long or very new? What is their feedback count? What do they sell? Are they listing coffee mugs and one rare stamp? Red flag.
- 4) Always look at the description. Read the listing carefully. Does the seller state... returns allowed if stamp not as described... but there is literally no description for the stamp other than the picture and Scott catalog #?
- 5) Does the seller accept returns?
- 6) Where is the seller located? US... local... west coast? Europe, China, Russia? This may have an impact on how long it takes (especially with COVID) as to how long it will take to get a purchase delivered.
- 7) Shipping costs. It may not be a deal if you get an auction for \$2.00... but shipping is \$9.95. Read the listing carefully.
- 8) Look at the sellers completed sales. Is there a listing that has sold multiple times? Is there a buyer that is ... commonly bidding up the price on a stamp... but never wins the auction... “schill bidding?” I have personally caught this happening and reported it... and that seller was banned.

[Editor's note: All of the points made in the article are pertinent. I have been an active on eBay since the fall of 1998, at first, I was mostly a seller. For the last 15 years I have been exclusively a buyer. One of my major gripes has been buying an item for \$5 and being dinged for a \$3 shipping/handling fee. There are a handful of sellers of material that I am interested in – that I actively avoid because of outrageous shipping/handling fees. One in particular who I thought would combine the shipping on three small items that amounted to about \$30, that would have fit in a standard envelope, dinged me for \$9 on shipping. When I complained the response was quick and to the point – “my lot descriptions say NOTHING about combining shipping fees.” That was my last order with the seller. Read the lot descriptions before you act!]

To Miss Fyrne Haugen from Santa Claus, Indiana

by Mike Schumacher

Don't recall when or where I picked these gems up, along my philatelic journey over the years, but thought they were fitting for this time of the year. Hopefully everyone had a safe and wonderful Holiday Season!

Two covers addressed to "Miss Fyrne Haugen". The first one, in 1938 when she was living in Mayville, North Dakota (a farming community with a population in 1938 of about 1300 people) and interestingly postmarked on December 25, 1938 from Santa Claus, Indiana. The second is addressed to her in Mankato, Minnesota on December 14, 1949, also postmarked from "Santa Claus, Indiana".

It appears that the Santa Claus, Indiana postmark underwent some changes during that period. The 1938 postmark is significantly larger than the 1949 postmark. Additionally, in 1949 it appears the Santa Claus post office had an extra hand stamp with Santa, his sleigh, and reindeers. On the reverse it has a 1949 Christmas seal.

The history of the town of Santa Claus, Indiana – it was established in 1854 and at the time known as Santa Fe. Two years later when it was trying to establish a Post Office the U.S. Department of the Post Office refused their application, because there was already a Santa Fe, Indiana Post Office. The members of the community held some meetings and chose the name Santa Claus. Thus, it is the only town in the world to bear the name "Santa Claus". Obviously, because of the name -- the post office receives thousands of pieces of mail every year. The post office creates a special Christmas pictorial hand cancellation postmark every year. (Now that could be a philatelic specialty collection.)

Interestingly, most of the residents of Santa Claus, Indiana live in the gated community of Christmas Lake Village. The community is developed around three lakes – Christmas Lake, Lake Holly and Lake Noel. Other residents live in the "Holiday" subdivision north of town.

The town of Santa Claus includes many themed attractions such as *Santa's Candy Castle*; *Santa's Stables*; *the Santa Claus Museum*; *Frosty's Fun Center*; Holiday World & Splashin' Safari; Christmas Lake Golf Course; Santa's Lodge, and of course Lake Rudolph Campground & RV Resort. With this much fun and excitement it begs the question – How many of us have visited Santa Claus, Indiana? Maybe in 2021! Have a great New Year!

