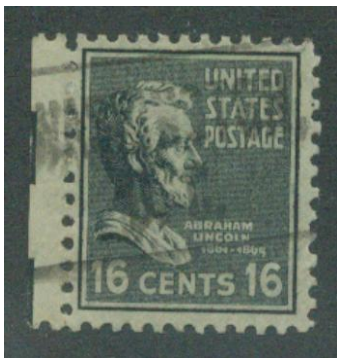


## The Thrill Of The Chase

By Richard Pederson

Why do we collect stamps? If asked, a group of collectors would likely come up with a variety of responses. Those responses might range from interest in the subject (e.g., trains on stamps) to enjoyment in acquiring at least one stamp from every stamp issuing entity, past and present. I venture to say that most true collectors are driven by more primeval motivations. I believe that the typical collector is actually motivated by the thrill of the chase. Normally, upon starting a stamp or cover collection, the collector sets his/her collecting goals. The initial goal may be modest, such as collecting each United States stamp issued during the collector's birth year, or it may be more difficult to accomplish, such as attaining an example of every United States commemorative stamp that has been issued in superb mint no-hinged condition. Collecting goals may also change as a person becomes a more experienced philatelist or as their collecting interests evolve. No matter what your goals, the thing that makes collecting fun and challenging is the pursuit of those goals. Each time you acquire an item needed to accomplish a collecting goal, there is a sense of satisfaction that is derived from being that much closer to accomplishment of your goal. The feeling of satisfaction increases the closer you get to your ultimate goal, which is completion of your collecting area.

As a youth, I had starter albums to house my collections of worldwide and United States issues. One of my early collecting goals was to obtain used copies of the entire Presidential issue of 1938. I obtained most of the stamps by clipping them from envelopes, purchasing stamp packets, and trading with friends. At the time, it surprised me that the most difficult stamps to find in this set were not the most expensive. The \$2 and \$5 values in the set were the most costly, but they were



relatively easy to find. It took me the longest to obtain several of the values denominated in the teens, with the 16 cent value picturing Abraham Lincoln being the last one I was able to locate. I still remember my increasing satisfaction as I added the last few items in the set and my relief when I finally added that elusive 16 cent stamp. I suspect the 16 cent value (pictured at left) was difficult to find because it not only pictured a popular president, but it also had a smaller quantity issued than most of the other stamps in the set.

If there is any doubt that it is the hunt that drives you as a collector, see how you react when your goal is fulfilled. Many a collector, once they have completed their quest, has either sold their collection or set it aside and moved on to something else. If having a complete collection is what gave the collector satisfaction, they would view it every day, savoring their achievement. Instead, most collectors that

## The Thrill Of The Chase

achieve a collecting goal move on to pursue something else. The reason for this is that the typical collector is driven by the thrill of the hunt for collectibles, not by the fleeting satisfaction of owning a complete collection.

Some people realize that it is the challenge of the chase that drives them and, therefore, set goals that are very difficult, if not impossible, to attain. Collecting goals can be made difficult by either the rarity or the cost of the items sought. Those with sufficient financial resources can set goals without regard to cost, but, like everyone else, they must confront the challenges rarity imposes. Fortunately, costs are driven by demand and knowledgeable collectors can set their goals accordingly. Some items that are not rare are out of reach for many collectors because they are quite expensive. For instance, the United States Trans-Mississippi Exposition issue (Scott numbers 285 through 293) is not rare but is costly due to very high demand. The high value of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition issue, which has a retail value of nearly \$2,000 in unused VF condition, is pictured at the right. On the other hand, some rare items are not very expensive, due to limited demand, but are extremely challenging to locate.



Many of those who are motivated by the thrill of the chase are able to remain satisfied without ever completing their collecting goal(s). For example, the collector's goal may be to collect all worldwide stamps issued prior to 1940. Since this goal includes many stamps that are unique or very rare (i.e., less than 10 known), there is virtually no chance of completion. Despite having no chance of ultimate success in completing the goal, the collector is able to remain happy because, with the broadly defined collecting area, the thrill of the chase never ends because there is always something affordable that can be added to his/her collection.

Regardless of your goals, are you driven by the quest to obtain items needed to achieve your goals or are you motivated by something else? If you have ever completed a collecting area, what did you do next? Did you set the collection aside or dispose of it? Did you commence a new philatelic quest to accomplish an even more challenging collecting goal? The answers to questions like these determine your approach to collecting.

[Note: This article first appeared in the Fourth Quarter 2012 edition of *NSDA News*.]