

# America's Ugliest Stamp

by John Walter

Granted this is a matter of opinion but the U.S. Scott# 2521 is certainly a strong nominee for the title of "America's Ugliest Stamp."

The Postal Service issued its nondenominated Make-Up Rate stamp on January 22, 1991, in Washington, DC. One of these stamps, plus 25¢ of additional postage, equaled the F-stamp rate. It could be used only in conjunction with



other denominated or letter-rate stamps because it did not contain the phosphorous ink necessary for processing on Postal Service automated cancellation equipment.

The stamp was designed by Dick Sheaff and printed on an offset press by the American Bank Note Company.

For some strange reason the USPS used 17 words to say, "four cents." Postal Service spokesman Art Shealy said at the time, "It's not a very pretty stamp, we admit that up front." Agreed!

The makeup stamps were supposed to bridge the gap between the old first-class rate and the new rate. The idea was for people to paste them next to the 25¢ stamp.

The 2017 *Scott Specialized Catalogue of U.S. Stamp & Covers* has the price as the minimum value 25¢ whether mint or used. No premium value for ugly stamps.

## A Denominational Problem

It takes time to ship stamps to local post offices, and the Postal Service did not know what the new rates would be. So the agency decided not to put a denomination on the makeup stamps, thus making them usable no matter what the new rates were.

Once the 29¢ price was approved, Mr. Shealy said, the Postal Service could not just ship out its inventory of unsold 4¢ stamps. He said the Postal Service calculated that it needed two billion makeup stamps, but had only several million 4¢ stamps in its warehouses.

Interesting question: "How many of these stamps were simply thrown away by non-collectors since they have no value on them?" The USPS solved the make-up rate problem with printing of the Forever stamps starting in 2010.

Anyone else want to nominate a stamp in this category? Any country will do.

*John Walter* is a member and collects U.S. used postal stationery, Japan, People's Republic of China, some U.S., and U.N. stamps.