

Experts stamp out Iowa museum hopes: 'Inverted Jenny' a fake



By MARGERY A. BECK, Associated Press | Posted: Sat 9:35 AM, Aug 03, 2019 | Updated: Sat 7:08 PM, Aug 03, 2019

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) - Hopes by a small aviation museum in southwestern Iowa that a stamp in its possession was rare enough to parlay a potential fortune crashed Friday when experts told them it wasn't real, and likely not even worth the paper it was glued upon.

The Iowa Aviation Museum in Greenfield, Iowa, has had what it thought was a 1918 "Inverted Jenny" stamp on public display for some 20 years, dating back to when it was donated to the museum, glued to a board along with several other stamps. A notation from the donor attached to the board speculated then that it was worth about \$73,000.

Experts at the national stamp convention meeting in Omaha knew immediately the stamp wasn't authentic, said Ken Martin with the American Philatelic Society that's holding the show through Sunday.

"It wasn't the right size. It was too small," Martin said. "This version was likely cut out of a postage stamp auction catalog."

An examination under a microscope confirmed experts' initial doubt. A 100-year-old stamp would have been printed from an artist's engraving, so the image under a microscope would appear as a series of lines. A reproduction for printed material decades later would have been comprised of a series of tiny dots, which is what appeared under the scope, Martin said.

The news was disappointing for those at the museum, which also serves as the home of the Iowa Aviation Hall of Fame and had hoped to auction the stamp for hundreds of thousands of dollars and build a new museum hangar.



FILE - In this June 2, 2016 file photo, a missing poster for the remaining "Inverted Jenny," one of four rare 1918 stamps featuring an airplane printed upside-down and stolen in 1955, is displayed at the World Stamp Show, in New York. Hopes by a small aviation museum in southwestern Iowa that a stamp in its possession was rare enough to parlay a potential fortune crashed Friday, Aug. 2, 2019, when experts told them it wasn't real, and likely not even worth the paper it was glued upon. The Iowa Aviation Museum in Greenfield, Iowa, had what it thought was an "Inverted Jenny" stamp on display for some 20 years, but it wasn't authentic. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens, File)

"We really didn't know what we had," Larry Konz, a tour guide at the museum, said Friday. "When we were told that we might have the real deal, I thought, 'My God, we might have something quite valuable here, and we've had it hanging on a wall all this time.'"

Had it been real, it would be worth between \$300,000 and \$400,000 at auction, Martin said. There were only 100 of the stamps printed in 1918, with the image of a JN-4-H "Jenny" biplane accidentally displayed upside-down on a 24-cent stamp.

Norma Nielson, of Eugene, Oregon, was at the convention Friday to see for herself if the museum was in possession of one of the few rare and unaccounted stamps. Nielson is a stamp collector who grew up in the museum's hometown of Greenfield, and had put museum officials in touch with the American Philatelic Society to check the stamp's authenticity.

"I knew it was probably a slim chance of it being genuine, given how rare that stamp is," she said. "But, boy, it sure would have been exciting if it had been."

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