



PETER REXFORD STAMPS & COINS

## Holograms: They're Free For The Asking

**T**HE OLD SAYING, "The only difference between men and boys is the size of their wallets and the price of their toys" (or something materialistic like that), fits me to a T. Really. Get me near an electronics or "gadget" store and I'm there until closing. I love the toys of science.

Some of the most exciting discoveries of today's revolutionary technology are holograms. These are two dimensional images, which appear to be three dimensional. They are far more advanced than the old stereopticon slides of the 1890s or the amusing View Masters of the 1960s. Holograms require no special viewer.

How, you ask, does any of this relate to stamp or coin collecting? Fair question. The more advanced holography becomes, the more we can expect to see it incorporated onto security documents, including stamps and currency. Anyone with a Visa or MasterCard has already been introduced to this a la the little colored picture of a flying bird or the initials "MC" on the card's corner. Be assured, this is only the beginning. Treasury officials are already exploring other possibilities.

I can't begin to explain the intricate science behind holography, but, from a bare bones standpoint, it is the multiple laser engraving of an image onto specially treated film. Suppose you want to produce a hologram of a coffee cup. A laser beam is simultaneously shot through a lens reflecting it off the cup as well as off a mirror near the cup. The beam bouncing off the mirror is recorded on the film in one direction. The laser beam is bounced off the cup and recorded on the same film in a second direction. The difference in deflection between the two angles are read and recorded onto the film. These two angles create the illusion of depth in the cup so it appears you can see around its corners. I know. I'm sorry. I only got a C+ in science, too.

Technological confusion aside, holograms are just plain fun. Today they adorn everything from paperback books to necklaces and games. But, far and away, the most creative use I've seen was on a set of three "Ghostbusters" cereal boxes (from the hit movie of the same name). Smack on the front of each box was a big 4-inch-by-5-inch hologram of a different Ghostbusters cartoon character.

When I first saw these in the grocery store, I considered the extra cost of the cereal because of the hologram. "What a waste!" I thought. "They're pricing themselves out of the cereal market." Then it hit me. If I were a kid, riding in a shopping cart being pushed by my mom (that rarely happens anymore), the one thing in that whole aisle that would catch my eye would be the box of Ghostbusters! I wouldn't be able to live without it. Even without riding in the cart, I fell for it. The three boxes are now the focal point of my kitchen.

Several firms, including image innovator Polaroid, are mass producing holograms. The runaway leader, however, is the American Bank Note Co. Its Holographics Division in Elmsford, N.Y., headed by senior vice president Robert Charles, produces more than 95 percent of the world's holograms. It also holds the patents for using holograms on all security documents.

With the generous assistance of the ABN Holographics Division, I've acquired several thousand special holograms. While they last, I



The stamp commemorating New Jersey's 200th year of statehood.

will send one *free* to any reader who would like one. The image is of the Statue of Liberty and is a knockout!

Because of demand, the offer is limited strictly to one hologram per request. To receive one, you must supply a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope. Do not send smaller envelopes, as holograms hate to be bent. Mail these to: Peter Rexford, Hologram Offer, The Stamp & Coin Exchange, c/o the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 900 North Tucker Boulevard, St. Louis, Mo. 63101. These will be sent as quickly as possible but may still take a few weeks.

□

**Recently, I returned** home from a whirlwind trip around New England. While there, as always, I immersed myself in colonial history. A delightful reminder of my trip is a brand new stamp commemorating the 200th year of statehood for New Jersey.

Focusing on the moniker, "The Garden State," the 22-cent stamp depicts a colonial farmer carrying a basket full of produce. The warm colors used by designer Jim Lamb are very appealing.

Dating to before 1687, New Jersey was one of the strongest and most vital of the original 13 colonies. It was the "New Jersey Plan" that called for equal representation of each state in national government.

The stamp was issued on Sept. 11, in Trenton, but first day of issue cancels are available until Oct. 11. To receive a first day cancel, send your request along with an unstamped, self-addressed envelope and a check for 22 cents for each cancel to: Customer-Affixed Envelopes, New Jersey Statehood Stamp, Postmaster, Trenton, N.J. 08650.