Colonel Green

Edward Howland Robinson Green (1868-1936) was the son of Hetty Today a letter that would probably not score many points in an exhibit in terms of condition, but which I would nevertheless like to present here because of the addressee Colonel E.H.R. Green. The Reko cover was franked in Hamburg on 4 November 1933. The sender declared himself to be a private individual. In Germany it was opened and resealed for foreign exchange control purposes (see reverse). The Colonel or one of his employees must have handled the letter, which was franked with scenes from Richard Wagner operas, Frederick the Great and Hindenburg stamps and arrived on 15 November 1933, rather roughly.

Edward Howland Robinson Green (1868-1936), often known simply as "Colonel Green", was one of the most colourful figures in early American philately. As the son of the legendary financial matriarch Hetty Green - unjustly infamous as 'the stingiest woman in the world' - he inherited an immense fortune after her death. But unlike his ascetic mother, Edward was a bon vivant, a technology enthusiast and, above all, a passionate collector. Among his many passions - including cars, coins and antiques - philately held a special place. He left his mark on US philately

After the death of his mother in 1916, Edward Green inherited an estimated 100 to 200 million US dollars - an astronomical sum at the time. He used this almost unlimited fortune to buy his way into the upper echelons of the collecting world. In doing so, he did not limit himself to mass-produced items, but rather sought out the rarest and most spectacular pieces. Green was not a theorist, but a man of acquisition. He sought advice from experts and bought up entire collections - often with the aim of owning several rare pieces at once.

The complete reconstructed sheet of the ‘Inverted Jenny’. The most expensive single stamp (item 49) was sold for $2,006,000 in 2023, a block of four (items 87,88/97,98) in 2021 for $4,860,00. Both times by the auction house Siegel (Copyright 2025. All rights reserved by Siegel Auction Galleries Inc. and Inverted Jenny.com. Information and images may be used with credit to Siegel/InvertedJenny.com subject to guidelines and restrictions.

His most famous coup in philately was undoubtedly the purchase of the entire sheet of the ‘Inverted Jenny’, one of the most famous minting errors in US postal history. The stamp shows a Curtiss JN-4 aeroplane upside down - a printing error of which only 100 are known to exist. Green recognised not only the rarity value but also the prestige gain and secured the entire sheet. This has almost legendary status in the scene today: Green had the sheet numbered - each stamp was numbered in pencil on the reverse - a measure that allows collectors to trace the provenance of each individual ‘Inverted Jenny’ to this day. This systematic cataloguing shows that Green was definitely a methodical collector - not just a capitalist with a passion for collecting, but a man with a sense of order and history.

Stamp	Description	Note
Inverted Jenny (USA, 1918)	24c Curtiss JN-4 airplane printed upside down	Green bought the entire sheet of 100 stamps
Hawaiian Missionary 2c (Hawaii, 1851)	Earliest stamp of Hawaii, extremely rare	Green had several, including the rare 2¢ value
1869 Pictorial Invert (USA)	15c Columbus landing printed upside down	Several inverted pieces in Green's collection
Postmaster Provisional (USA, ca. 1845)	Lokale Ausgaben vor US-Standardmarken	Extremely rare precursors to U.S. postage
5¢ Franklin 1847	Local issues before U.S. standard stamps	Depending on quality (unused = very expensive)
Confederate States 5¢ Jefferson Davis	Civil	Green had proofs and essays
Graf Zeppelin Set (USA, 1930)	Special issue for airship travel	Green collected complete unused sets
Essays and Proofs	Designs and test prints	Extremely rare depending on the prototype
1¢ Washington Perf 12x10 (1914)	Extremely rare perforation error	Green had several of these perforation errors

Examples of postage stamps from E. Green's former property that are traded at high prices today

Green collected systematically: his collections included not only the USA, but also colonial areas, classic issues from all over the world and rare essays and proofs. His commitment to American postal history was particularly significant, especially for classic issues, provisional issues and 19th century essays. Many of his stamps were unique or existed only in vanishingly small editions. He was also one of the main promoters of research into US local issues and private postal services.

After Green's death in 1936, his philatelic collection was sold by Harmer, Rooke & Co. in spectacular auctions over many years. Many of his items are now part of important museum collections or in the possession of renowned private collectors. The name "ex Colonel Green" has become a seal of quality in philatelic circles - an indication of origin, significance and usually also a high market value.

Literature: AI-searches; Wikipedia; https://invertedjenny.com