

Title:

How Is A Round Bluebird Like An Upside Down Airplane?

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Summary:

Maybe you have heard of the "upside down airplane." It's one of the most sought-after collectible postage stamps in the world. The two-color stamp gets its name from the fact that it depicts an airplane flying upside down, relative to the stamp's text and decorative border. The "upside down airplane" was the result of a printer's error, if you're wondering.

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Article Body:

Maybe you have heard of the "upside down airplane." It's one of the most sought-after collectible postage stamps in the world. The two-color stamp gets its name from the fact that it depicts an airplane flying upside down, relative to the stamp's text and decorative border. The "upside down airplane" was the result of a printer's error, if you're wondering.

In the world of vintage radios, the equivalent of the upside down airplane stamp, in terms of collector desirability, is the Sparton Bluebird. Unlike that famous postage stamp, though, the Bluebird was not created by mistake. Far from it. Having an unlikely shape and appearance for a radio of its day, it was the carefully thought out product of one of the top designers working in the 1930s (as well as the 1940s and '50s), Walter Dorwin Teague.

Teague's Bluebird is considered by many to represent the pinnacle of industrial design in the art deco mode. The outstanding feature of this radio is a 14-inch round mirror that is tinted a cobalt blue and accented with streamlined chrome strips and knobs. The radio parts themselves are hidden in a housing situated to the rear of the mirror, and having a forward-facing speaker. Everyone who sees a Bluebird radio is struck with its astonishing yet simply stated beauty. Some Bluebirds have even been displayed in museums.

The original 1936-vintage Sparton Bluebird sold for between forty and fifty

dollars. Today you would have to pay \$3,000 to \$5,000 to acquire one. People have been known to bid more than a thousand dollars on eBay for a non-working Bluebird!

Due to the fragility of the radio's mirror, it is thought that many if not the majority of Bluebirds ever sold may have been damaged at some point and ultimately discarded. If you ever come across an intact one for sale, consider yourself lucky--and snap it up!

Originally, Bluebirds came with a 14-inch round platter that was made from a mirror matching that of the radio. The Bluebird would be set on the platter as a way to display it to greatest advantage. Finding a Bluebird that still has the platter with it is an especially rare occurrence.

Replica Bluebirds have been produced from time to time. Some of these replicas are quite lovely in their own right, but don't be fooled by them if you are wanting to get your hands on the genuine article. If you find what appears to be a Bluebird, look for the Sparton name on it and the model number 506 or 566.

Walter Dorwin Teague's bold designs made a powerful impact on the industrial and commercial landscape of the middle part of the 20th century. He and his firm designed cameras for Eastman Kodak, a passenger aircraft interior for Boeing, and a Steinway piano for the 1939 New York World's Fair. The design company he founded continues today.

For all his achievements, though, Walter Dorwin Teague will always be hailed by radio collectors and enthusiasts for one thing: the Sparton Bluebird, a marvel of the art deco era.