Things That Hide in Plain Sight!

By Francis Ferguson

I would be willing to wager that more than one member of the CFSC has things hiding in their collections that they do not recognize for what they are. Here are three of them – one is from 1943 but the other two are modern errors or oddities that you can look for.

It is almost a given that this perforation oddity has been overlooked in many collections since its issuance in 1975.

The normal stamp is on the left and it is notable for the exact meeting of the perforations at the corners (reference orange circles) and the short perforations running into the margin paper on all sides. This is an easy way to tell the common perf 11¼ -- plate block of 12 of Scott 1596 (CV=$3.25) from the much rarer perf 11 Scott 1596d plate block of 12 which has a CV of $350. Notice that the perforations (see orange arrows) go all the way to the edge of the margin paper and at the corner of the stamps the perf holes do not meet perfectly.

Other production errors to watch out for, include pairs with full horizontal gutter between, imperf pairs (about 500 pairs known), and finally yellow omitted (about 500 known, only purchase with expert paper as fakes exist).

I will be on the look out for those other production errors in the future.

Issued in 1991 this rather common looking stamp has surprises associated with it. The top pair (Scott 2523c -- blue, red & brown) is obviously different from the bottom pair (Scott 2523 -- blue, red & claret). Scott 2523c is often referred to as the "Toledo brown" variety. How many of these are misidentified in collections? The difference in catalog value is minor. Scott 2523c mint pair is $6.00 while a mint pair of 2523 comes in at $1.50.

The catalog also lists two more varieties as 2523b as an imperf pair at $20 and 2523d on pre-phosphored coated paper with a pair at $10. Additionally, 2523A can be found with a design & color variation. I will be looking for all of these in the future. I would like to find both the common coil and the Toledo brown variety on cover used in period. Anyone have one?

These stamps referred to as the Overrun Countries -- have been hiding in collections for generations. Issued in 1943 using an unusual printing method for the time -- the issue combined offset printing with a rotary press. The result was a real mess of printing "errors" – more accurately called varieties.

The existence of many of these reverse printing varieties were well known to the philatelic community long before the Scott's Specialized Catalog recognized them. More than 80 years later it is still a work in progress in my opinion.

This stamp is a perfect example of what to watch for -- the top stamp Scott 916a which is actually the normal printing as it was planned with the blue vertical shading over the horizontal flag strip (reference green circle) – it has no price in the 2026 specialized catalog. The bottom stamp is the "common" Scott 916 and has a mint price of 50 cents but is actually the reverse printing, with the blue horizontal flag strip OVER the blue vertical shading line (reference green circle).

Are you confused yet? This is the only case that I am aware of, where the planned design is considered the error. Go figure. In all other cases the vertical shading lines used to create the illusion of depth and motion are supposed to be the top color over the primary colors of the flags.

This set of 13 stamps is a challenge to identify and not for the faint of heart!

Caveat Emptor, #48

All that glitters -- is not gold. By Francis Ferguson

The listing reads; "First Day of Issue 1918 22k Inverted Jenny Stamp." Further information is noted; "A rare reproduction in 22 k gold of the most sought-after stamp in America. Envelope was a slight stain on corner." Starting bid of $85 with $10 shipping. No returns accepted.

This has to make one wonder about people who create and sell stuff that is just pretty -- with zero philatelic value. The note on the cover says "First Day of Issue | of the original stamp | May 13, 1918". No evidence of a cancel of any nature can be found. There is no value in the supposed 22K gold as it is 1 micron thick and impossible to recover as it will flash and vaporize.

This is no more than a fluff piece designed to separate people from their money.

What do you think?