

Cancelled or Not!

By Howard Grenzebach

The stamp on the left side of this page is mint and has not been cancelled while the other one (the stamp on the right) has a good CDS cancel that is hard to read having been struck twice. But there's a problem here. I only have one copy of this stamp. The picture on the right is a picture of the stamp on the left. Allow me to explain.



The stamp was made with the engraving process. An engraver etches the design into a plate leaving shallow ruts to accept the ink. The plate is then pressed onto a sheet of appropriate paper leaving the ink as color and slightly raised on the surface of that paper. The result is what is deemed by many collectors as the most beautiful of the printing processes.

Now and then the printing moves a bit faster than usual, and a printed sheet hasn't the time to dry before the next sheet is printed and laid on top. The damp ink is then transferred to the sheet above it which shows as a reverse print (or image) like this one.



Most transfers show up as small smudges of ink on the gum side of a stamp but now and then a masterpiece of a transfer finds its way to the collector.

There is an alternative (and more likely) explanation for this unusual result. During the printing process a sheet failed to go through. The print was then transferred to the backing plate. Then the next sheet would rest on that plate being printed normally (on top) while picking up the ink from the backing plate resulting in this beautiful reverse print on the back of a normal stamp. And the rest of the stamps from this same sheet are still out there, somewhere.

The scan on the right comes from the front of the stamp on the left.

Howard Grenzebach is currently a Director of NSSS and collects Worldwide pre-1950, early Grenada, and Swiss standing Helvetia.
