

NEVIS: THE SPITFIRE STAMPS, ISSUED MARCH 24, 1986.

#460-463

Various types of this famous plane, the key British plane in World War II.

In 1991 Robson Lowe, who is in charge of the philatelic department of Christie's, offered me several sections of the Format Archives. I had over the years previously purchased through him many Newfoundland and Latin American proofs and specimens that were in the Waterlow & Sons Archives.

Format, which was thrown into bankruptcy in the course of a legal fight by two groups of shareholders, had its assets sold by the government appointed liquidator. This was Robson Lowe. He had the right to dispose of the Archives, either privately or by auction. Several sections went in auctions held by Christie's. Others went to various buyers both in England, Europe and North America. I purchased the one lot that appealed to me - stamps that were printed but never issued for various reasons. Also in my lot were some errors that occurred during the printing.

Format was a huge concern. During its business life it printed tens of thousands of different stamps for over 100 postal entities. Most of these were turned over to the Crown Agents. Format never sold stamps to collectors. The Crown Agents did, as they have a philatelic agency used mainly by dealers. This agency supplied not only the 60 or so members of the British Commonwealth but also acted as agents for various other stamps printed by Format, including various Middle East countries, Latin American, even Liberia.

Printing billions of stamps on such a vast scale and with complicated modern machinery, mistakes were bound to happen. Samples of what not to do went into the Archives. In my lot I found five major error varieties, and a few minor, of little consequence. Deliberately made? Not a chance. In fact I'm amazed at what little did turn up in my lot, or is advertised elsewhere.

Robson Lowe wrote up several errors and of course described all the unissued varieties in the 'British Philatelist' magazine. One lot was left unidentified and it puzzled me. There were four uncut sheets of the Spitfire set, #460-#463. All four values were printed on one sheet. In addition there were some 100 little sheets of #464, the miniature sheet, plus four uncut sheets of the miniatures, 20 panes to each sheet. At the top of each sheet was the color guide. Looking at them I could not figure out what was wrong with them. I did not have a set of stamps with which to compare them. Scott does not list the colors nowadays, especially if several are used in printing.

So when this July 14 final Format sale came around I made sure to buy all the Nevis Archive which had the uncut sheets. Found only two uncut sheets of the Spitfire set #460-463, plus two uncut sheets of the miniature panes. Comparing these with what I had on hand for the earlier purchase was a lesson, showing what a difference the absence of one color produces. The yellow color was missing in my original 1991 purchase of uncut sheets of the 20 miniature panes, while the four uncut sheets of #460-463 lacked the red color. A simple enough error, due to two sheets going through the press at the same time resulting in the sheet underneath missing one color.

At least the complete set of four color guides on the issued uncut sheet of miniatures were there to show what had happened to the sheets that Robson Lowe had sold me in 1991

(over)

As usual I'm dividing the uncut miniature sheets into pairs. The doubles become instant rarities. In this manner the issued doubles are twice as scarce as the errors as all I could find in the last purchase was two uncut sheets compared to four of the missing colors.

Here's what exists now. (The uncut sheets no longer exist).

#### The Miniatures

1. In pairs, yellow color missing, 20 each with color guide at the top
2. " " " " " 20 no color guide
3. In pairs, as issued, 10 with color guide
4. " " " " " 10 no color guide
5. Also I have about 100 single error miniatures as sold to me in 1991 lot.
6. And have about 20 of the issued #464 purchased from dealers.
7. As for the set of #460-463 four stamps, I have 100 each of the four errors counted as singles. All four stamps lack the red color.
8. And 50 each as issued, four values. These last are available from most any dealer handling British Commonwealth.

Kasimir Bileski

As to valuations for the eight, here are my retail figures based on my belief that as of now not a single uncut sheet exists elsewhere as errors. Nor are there any uncut sheets of the stamps as issued. All that can be assembled are extreme rarities.

1. & 3. - \$500.00
2. & 4. - \$400.00
5. - \$100.00
6. - \$3.00 but mine are not for sale separately
7. - \$400.00
8. - \$5.00, also not for sale separately.



Here is the most valuable lot dealing with the Spitfire set.

First of all, I had only two uncut sheets all stamps normal. <sup>as usual</sup> Of the error lot I had four uncut sheets, plus one more damaged.

Enclosed:

1 normal set of 4 singles -		
1 error set of 4 " -	value	\$ 400.00
1 centre unit cross gutter, 2 exist, nominal value		100.00
1 " " " " error set, 4 exist - value		700.00
1 error miniature sheet -		100.00
1 double unit of same with color guide -		200.00
1 " " issued sheet " " -		200.00
1 horizontal gutter pair error (4 exist) -		500.00
1 vertical " " " (4 exist) -		500.00
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	Total	\$2,700.00

Plus those in book - \$2,000.00

Total retail value \$4,700.00

Entire lot is yours at no charge  
with that 5¢ black R.P.

## THE SPITFIRE ERRORS

Of the many Nevis stamps that Format printed to be handed over to the British Crown Agents and sent on to Nevis in proper saleable form this is what happened in printing the Spitfire set of stamps. The printers assembled the four stamps in the set using two of the primary colors, namely, yellow and blue plus black. They printed a number of sheets and even cut them down to the proper units of 25 stamps per pane. The manager examined the result and decided that the colors were too weak to represent the formidable Spitfire. The red color was added and the result was satisfactory. The set was completed in the issued form. Black of course was also added for the usual lettering and figures. That I am sure is how the set acquired a missing color.

The same thing happened to the miniature sheet. Only in this case the red and blue were first tried with the usual black. Missing was the yellow color this time. The manager deemed the result again too weak using the two colors. Again he preferred the no nonsense old grey result when the yellow color was added. During the printing of the very first lot of four stamps, which produced four different stamps with the red color missing only two intact uncut sheets were destined for the Archives but these got mangled up and damaged in the printing machinery. Such were thrown away and only a few examples remained to be put into the Archives. These showed examples of the margins and gutters.

Kasimir Bileski

Dr. Purcell

From this source I am giving you the following:

Upper center pair with two showing the wide margin at the top with two of the errors on each side of the narrow gutter.

Only two units exist like this. My price for it is \$1,000.00.

I also include the similar narrow margin between stamps but this time there is two of each of the remainder two errors and the bottom margin shows the name of the company plus the color guide, which shows the black, the yellow and the blue form indicating the color. Missing is the red. Only one unit as enclosed exists. I value it at \$2,000.00.

I might as well show you a normal strip of ten stamps, which shows the complete color guide and again the name of the company.

Kasimir

NEVIS

#460-463

4 corner pairs of the great rarity - missing red color. The 2 sets of the error. One has the imprint of the printer: Format. Another pair shows only a blank where the red color should be. Only two sets exist.

\$8,000.00