

errors & freaks of the WALT DISNEY STAMP

BY EDWARD BERGEN

The United States 1968 6-cent Walt Disney commemorative [Figure 1] was one of few U.S. stamps that had been printed outside the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. It was expected that there might be more errors, freaks, and oddities, both printing and perforation varieties, for this stamp honoring Disney than was the case with other United States postage stamps. Ultimately, collectors of this stamp issue would not be disappointed.

The Achrovue Division of Union-Camp Corporation, acquired by International Paper in 1999, was the entity chosen by Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien, ostensibly to be able to achieve the color nuances for the new stamp that he felt necessary to most closely match the Disney color palate.

O'Brien also wanted the finished stamp to accurately capture the soft pastel colors of the final approved design that has Disney's portrait surrounded by a parade of children ... shades of the song "It's A Small World (After All)." The U.S. Post Office Department contracted Union-Camp to print and perforate this colorful image as a mini work of art.

The Walt Disney stamps were printed in press sheets of 400 subjects, eight panes of 50 stamps each. The stamp was issued September 11, 1968, in Marceline, Missouri, Disney's boyhood home.

It was printed using five inks: brown, black, blue, red, and ocher (yellow).

And so it was that a host of errors, freaks, and oddities, were inadvertently produced, with some color smudging and other minor variations still being discovered today.

Seven Scott-Catalog-Listed Disney Errors

There are seven major errors for the Disney stamp listed in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*.

Scott 1355a

The ocher (yellow) ink omitted error [Figure 2] does not



Figure 1. A normal example of the United States 6-cent Walt Disney stamp (Scott 1355) issued in 1968.



Figure 2. Walt Disney error (Scott 1355a) with the ocher ink omitted.

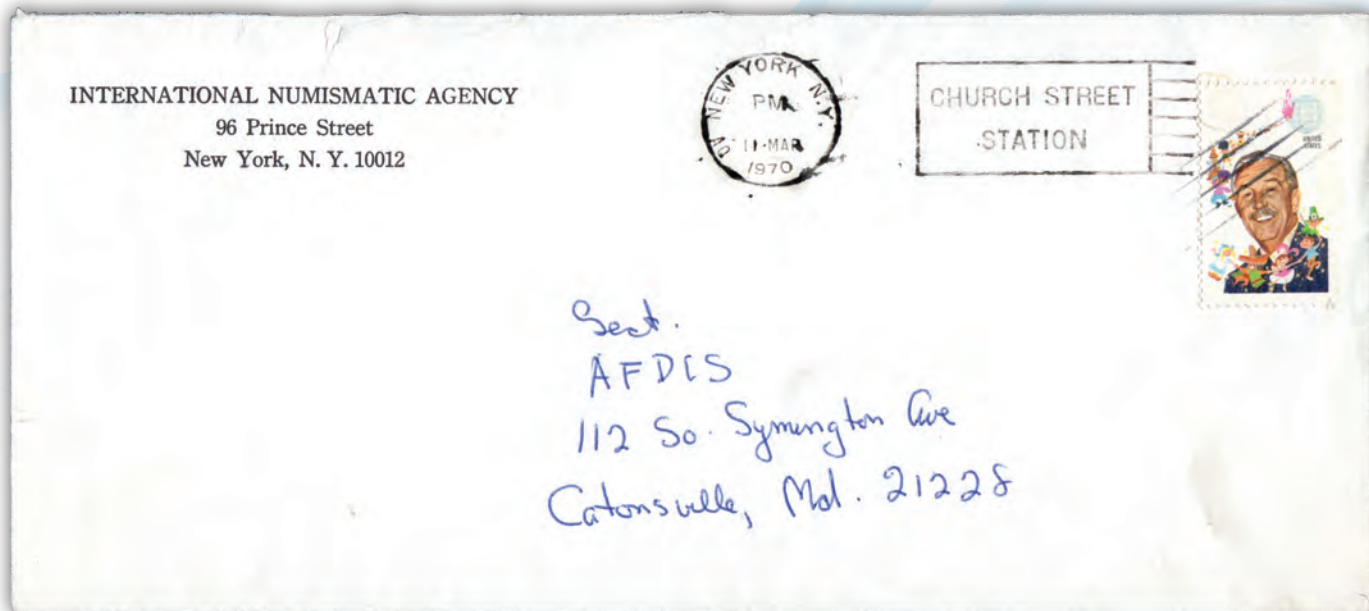


Figure 3. Cover mailed March 11, 1970, that bears a single Walt Disney error stamp (Scott 1355a).

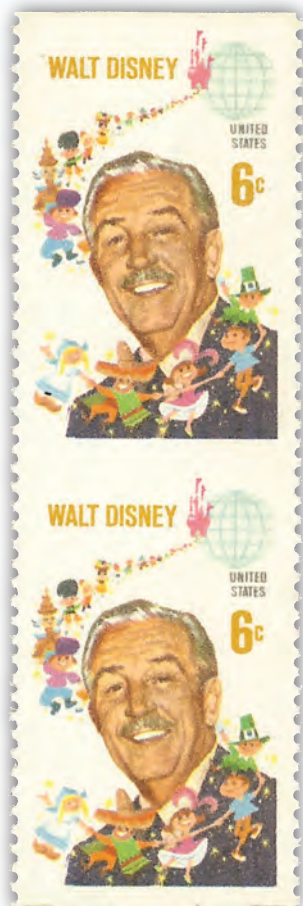


Figure 4. Vertical pair of Walt Disney stamps (Scott 1355b) that is imperforate between.

have the name “Walt Disney” or the “6c” denomination on the stamp. According to Stephen R. Datz in the *Scott Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Stamps*, 400 to 500 examples of this error exist.

Approximately four of this error are known on cover. One [Figure 3] was mailed March 11, 1970, from the International Numismatic Agency of New York City about a year and a half after the September 11, 1968, issue date.

According to a *Linn's Stamp News* article in the March 30, 1970, issue, eight of the error covers were originally mailed from the agency. The discovery of the error was announced during the Interpex stamp show by auctioneer Jacques Schiff Jr.

The article quoted Jack Radetsky saying, “It was funny, my boss mailing letters with Christmas seals passed through my mind when I noticed the stamps without the words ‘United States’ and the value, which is on all U.S. stamps.”

Scott 1355b

The vertical pair that is imperforate horizontally is the next error listed in the Scott catalog [Figure 4]. This perforation error boasts only 50 examples in existence, according to the Datz error catalog.

An interesting freak example of this error is also known [Figure 5]. It has an American Philatelic Society APEX certificate that states “... genuine [with] smeared color not normal for this error.”

No information exists indicating how many of this freak might exist.

Scott 1355c

Only 100 of the horizontal imperforate pair error

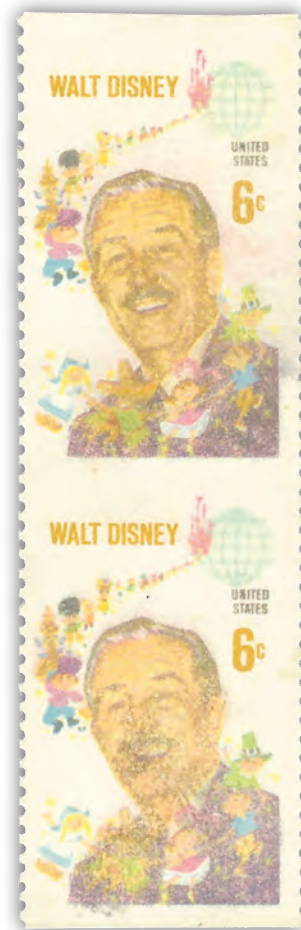


Figure 5. A freak variety of the Figure 4 Walt Disney stamp error pair.

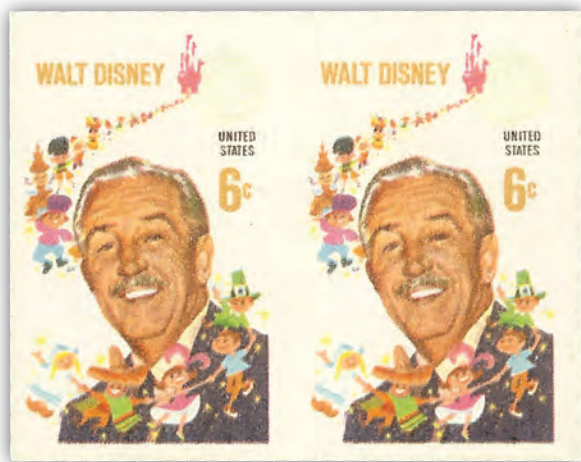


Figure 6. Horizontal imperforate pair of the Walt Disney stamp (Scott 1355c).



Figure 7. Black ink omitted Walt Disney stamp (Scott 1355d).

[Figure 6] are estimated to exist by Datz.

Scott 1355d

The black-ink-omitted error [Figure 7], according to the Datz catalog, has 35 known examples.

Scott 1355e

The horizontal pair, imperforate-between error [Figure 8], according to Datz, has only five pairs known to exist.

Scott 1355f

The blue-ink-omitted error [Figure 9], according to Datz, has only 35 known examples.

Scott 1355g

The tagging-omitted error [Figure 10] is pictured as a Mr. ZIP block from the upper-left corner. It is shown under normal lighting conditions.

In the early 1960s, the U.S. Post Office Department started to experiment with coating stamps with various phosphorescent substances that were only visible under ultraviolet light. This was done in order to expedite automated mail handling,



Figure 8. A horizontal pair, imperforate between, of the Walt Disney stamp (Scott 1355e).



Figure 9. A blue ink omitted error of the Walt Disney stamp (Scott 1355f).

THE WALT DISNEY ERRORS

Scott 1355a	ocher omitted	400–500 known
Scott 1355b	vertical pair, imperforate horizontally	50 known
Scott 1355c	imperforate pair	100 known
Scott 1355d	black omitted	35 known
Scott 1355e	horizontal pair, imperforate between	five known
Scott 1355f	blue omitted	35 known
Scott 1355g	tagging omitted	unknown quantity



Figure 10. A tagging omitted block of four Walt Disney stamps (Scott 1355g).

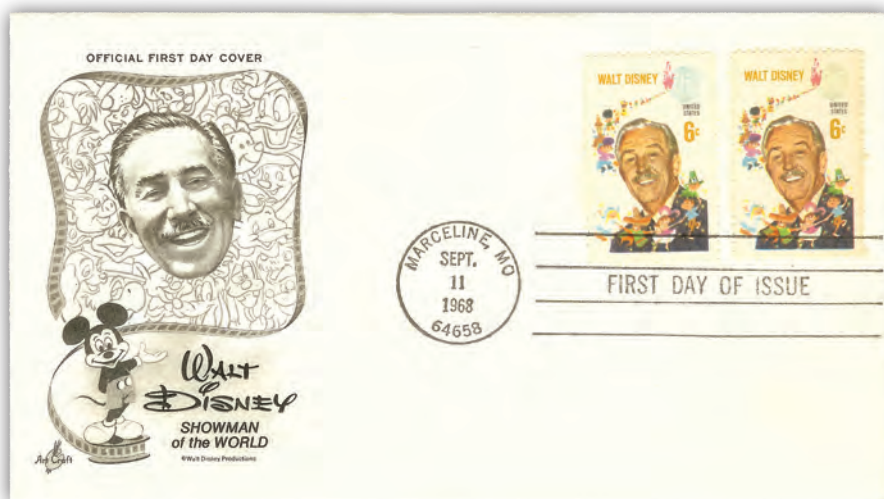


Figure 11. Two Artcraft cacheted first-day covers for the Walt Disney stamp. A normal stamp and tagging-omitted stamp were used on each cover. The cover at top was photographed under normal lighting conditions, and the cover below was photographed under ultraviolet lighting.

and it was this coating that triggered canceling machines. The Disney stamp was issued as a tagged stamp, but a number of Disney sheets were apparently produced and released without the phosphorescent coating. This untagged Disney stamp error is the most common of all the Scott catalog-listed errors.

The untagged stamp on cover [Figure 11] is another matter. This Disney first-day cover has an Artcraft cachet and is canceled in Marceline, Missouri, the site of the Disney stamp first-day ceremony. Both the normal tagged stamp and the untagged error were handcanceled on the same cover.

Also illustrated is a black-and-white photograph of a similar cover, photographed under an ultraviolet light to show

the difference between the tagged and untagged varieties. The cover shown in black and white is apparently a second example of a Disney first-day cover similar to the one shown above it. Note the placement of the first-day cancellation on each cover. The cancellation is higher on the black and white photocopy cover. To my knowledge, only these two first-day covers are known canceled with both Disney stamp varieties that have the normal and untagged error stamps.

Freaks

What follows are varieties not listed in the Scott catalog. They are freaks and oddities of the Disney stamp with various printing and perforation anomalies. One of the most dra-



Figure 12. An upper-right plate strip of 10 of the Walt Disney stamp that is misperforated and has an imperforate top margin.



Figure 13. A pane of 50 misperforated Walt Disney stamps.



Figure 14. A wide Walt Disney stamp that was created through a misperforation of the pane.



Figure 15. A narrow Walt Disney stamp, also created via a misperforated pane.

matic examples is the upper-right plate strip of 10 [Figure 12] that is misperforated and completely imperforate at the top margin. It is the unique plate strip of 10 from the one pane of 50 stamps known.

This item is unlisted by the Scott catalog but is documented by Ken Lawrence in his *The American Philatelist* article, “Files Shed Light on 6-Cent Walt Disney,” published December 1994. In the article Lawrence states, “Another error that appeared at about the same time (in addition to Scott 1355a & b) but not Scott-listed is an upper-right plate position pane that was completely imperforate at the top margin.”

Another freak, though not quite as dramatic as the plate strip of 10, is the full pane of Disney stamps [Figure 13] that shows a perforation shift to the left on the entire pane of 50. The pane has a vertical gutter running the full length of the right margin. The misperforation captures the vertical plate numbers in the lower-left corner of the pane.

Perforation freaks abound for the Disney stamp. Two single Disney stamps [Figures 14 and 15] dramatically show the wide and narrow varieties while a strip of seven [Figure 16] shows that



Figure 16. A strip of seven Walt Disney stamps that helps demonstrate how apparently one row of perforations was misaligned to create wide and narrow varieties.



Figure 17. A dramatic perforation shift on the Walt Disney stamp that split the stamp design in half.



Figure 18. A shift in the ocher ink on the Walt Disney stamp moved the "Walt Disney" and "6c" to the left.

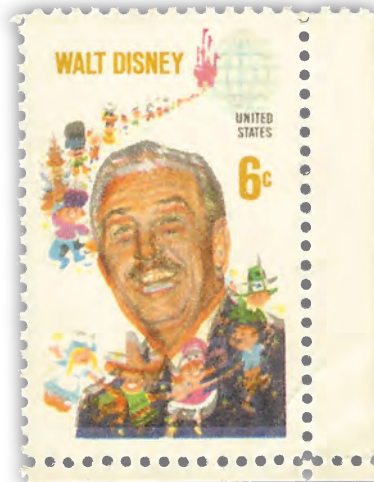


Figure 19. The black ink is shifted on this Walt Disney stamp, creating a fuzzy appearance to the design.



Figure 20. The right stamp has only part of the text "United States" showing.



Figure 21. The two Walt Disney stamps on the left side of this block exhibit smudging and smeared ink.

