

Philatelic Albinos

By Stan Cronwall

Just as albinos are rare in the animal world, so too are those found in the World of Philately.

A few have been done purposely, while most of the others have come as the result of printing errors. Many of the more "seasoned" members of NSSS probably recall the time when Frank Fey (now deceased) brought in several pieces of U. S. postal stationery with the indicia totally without color but clearly showing the raised impression of the "stamp".

These were from Frank's extensive U.S. collection which has been passed on to grandson, Travis Fey, who is a long time NSSS member, or the items may have been sold off at auction with a portion of Frank's holdings.

These items can probably be considered printing errors when the press was allowed to run out of ink.

Editor: Albino envelopes are relatively common from the 1880's on through 1965. They occurred when two cut envelope blanks fed through the press at the same time. The top blank received the ink and the bottom blank was also embossed but received no ink. When the blanks were separated and folded, one was normal and one was an albino. Missing color errors became much scarcer after 1965 when envelopes were inked and embossed first on paper from a roll and then cut into blanks. (The image on the right was scanned from an entire (U362) and contrast boosted to illustrate the embossing.) Ref: United Postal Stationery Society, *U.S. 19th Century Postal Stationery Catalogue 2012*.



An example of albinos created on purpose are the three semi-postal stamp set of French stamps shown on the left. (Editor: The image was darkened to bring out the impression on the albino stamp.) This set was issued by the Nazi collaborationist Vichy Government on October 12, 1942 to honor and benefit the Tricolor Legion. The Legion was formed in 1941 with the intent that it would fight with the Germans against the Soviets, but as a separate, independent French force. Hitler opposed this plan preferring instead to continue with the LVF (Legion of French Volunteers) which was incorporated into the German Wehrmacht against the Soviets on the Eastern Front.

The Tricolor Legion never reached operational status and was abandoned in the fall of 1942 lasting only six months. Members were absorbed into the LVF.

The tricolor is a reference to the French flag which has blue, white and red horizontal stripes.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 20 stamps and 5 albino impressions – 2 horizontal rows of 5 dark blue stamps, 1 row of 5 albino impressions, and 2 rows of 5 crimson stamps.

Sets of the three are fairly common and reasonably priced. The sheets of 20 are rare and command a significant price premium.

There is also a Vichy Tricolor Deluxe Sheet (souvenir sheet) which was produced by the Vichy Government Stamp Printery in Paris.

Stan Cronwall collecting interests include Germany: Third Reich 1933-45 and the areas it occupied (stamps covers & cards). He also collects U.S. World War II Patriotic Covers and Cards, Civil War Patriotic Covers (both U.S. and CSA), U.S. Naval Covers, DDR stamps, Post WW II Soviet Zone Hitler Head Obliteration stamps, covers & cards.