

ICELAND'S FIRST AIRMAIL ISSUE: An Update and a Non-Constant Variety

By Alfred A. Gruber



Figure 1.

Since writing of Iceland's first airmail issue in *The Posthorn* (February 1996), a variety of the airplane overprint was brought twice to my purview by dealer members (and advertisers in this journal).

Lizabeth Stamp Company, knowing my pursuit of that first issue with minor varieties, furnished a flight cover from Husavik to Seydhisfjardhur of 3 July 1929 using a strip of three (Figure 1). With the help of the overlay described in the original article, I found the right-hand stamp was position 36 in the sheet, and the left stamp position 34. Only now, I noticed position 34 has a fractured left outboard wing rib similar to 36 and was not included in Table 2 of the original article. (Collectors will recall the plate was printed in halves; thus, the anomaly of 34 will also fall on 84.)

At VAPEX 1997, Jay Smith brought to my attention a slightly lunular thin red line, about 14-mm long in the left FRIMERKI on that first air issue (Figure 2). He had five examples in blocks and questioned whether this was a constant variety. The example shown here has the line in position 24. How did I know? I learned it from the paragraph above because just below 24 is 34 with the wing rib problem. This wing rib fracture can't be 36 because its right hand partner does not have the wing tear of 37.

The red line through the left FRIMERKI puzzled me for a couple of years. An examination at 60X magnification shows a smooth outline with slight ink spatters along the edges. It definitely is not a constant variety, as it does not show on two full sheets, a few multiples, and the used printing cliché I examined over the years.

Recall that the vignettes were printed separately, including the monochrome stamps of this 1920 basic issue (see Jonsson). Furthermore, the vignettes were engraved as compared to the letterpress (relief printing) of the frames (*ibid.*).



Engraved printing employs a doctor wiping blade to remove excess ink before the impression (see Williams). A knick in the blade might form a line of that length, width, and shape until discovery and correction.

Opinions pro and con are welcome.

References:

Gruber, A. A., "Iceland's First Airmail Issue: 'Plating' with Transparency Overlay Leads to Discovery," *The Posthorn*, February 1996.

Jonsson, J.A., *One Hundred Years of Icelandic Stamps*

Williams, L.N. and M., *Fundamentals of Philately*



Figure 2.