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## Does Lightning Strike Twice?

*The 1935 King George V Silver Jubilee British Guiana 12c Stamp*

*By Sewall Hodges February 15, 2021*



*A Standard Wallace J34*



*The Damaged "U" and Twin Lightning Rods*

The British Guiana 1935 Silver Jubilee stamps come in four denominations and possess the usual colours and vignettes of many of the other Silver Jubilee British Colony and country stamps. King George V profile is of course on the right and Windsor Castle in green is framed on the left in this De La Rue printed J34 stamp. The above stamp is the Wallace J34 in my possession as part of an Omnibus Collection.

My Omnibus collection (unfortunately without the much sought after Egypt stamp) was acquired by my grandfather in the 1930's and handed down to me through my father. It seemed as if I were the only one in the family interested in stamps. After sitting in storage for 50 years, I decided to consider the sale of the collection. I started to conduct some research, which in turn rekindled my interest in stamp collecting. I undertook a full review of all my Omnibus stamps to insure that the collection was complete and of sound quality. During this effort, I learned about various new Silver Jubilee varieties that over the past many years had been discovered, particularly the extra flagstaff and the lightning conductor specialties.

In reviewing the collection, I took a lookout for any of above stamp varieties, as their values would be quite a bit more than those for standard Jubilee stamps. During that process this J35 caught my attention. The more closely I examined the stamp, the more unique features I discovered. It was not immediately clear to me if this was a new, previously undiscovered variety, or simply had an error stamp in front of me.

### The Misprint above the Letter "U"

At first, the misprint (or possibly plate aberration) above the letter "U" in GUIANA caught my eye, as it was simply so obvious. I could find no such similar misprints on any of the letters of the country names of my other Jubilee stamps or any other omnibus stamps that I viewed on the internet. The nature of the flaw is open to discussion. A damaged plate or ink error are the likely potential causes.



*The Letter "U" Error*



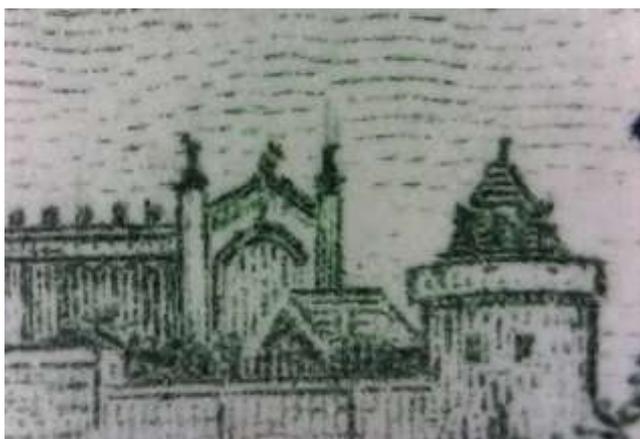
*A Normal Letter "U"*

As I looked more closely at this J34, I found other noteworthy differences – new characteristics that had never before been identified on Jubilee stamps. In some cases, similar features have been seen on different parts of some stamps. My close inspection revealed three additional unusual stamp characteristics.

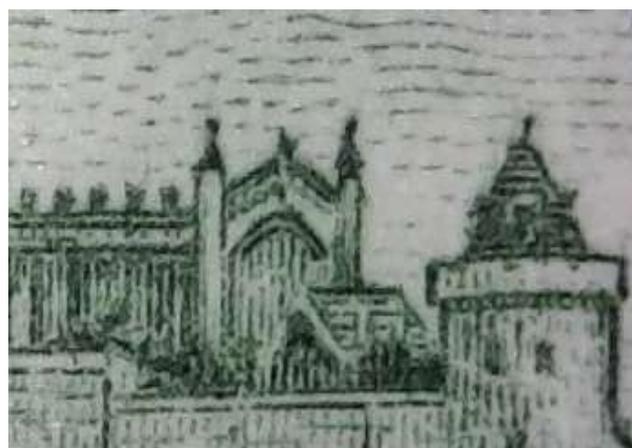
1. Dual lightning conductors clearly extending from the rightmost spire of St. George's Chapel,
2. a "crooked turret" on the front of St. George's Chapel, and
3. a "weathervane" on left spire of St. George's Chapel.

Each feature is worthy of comment.

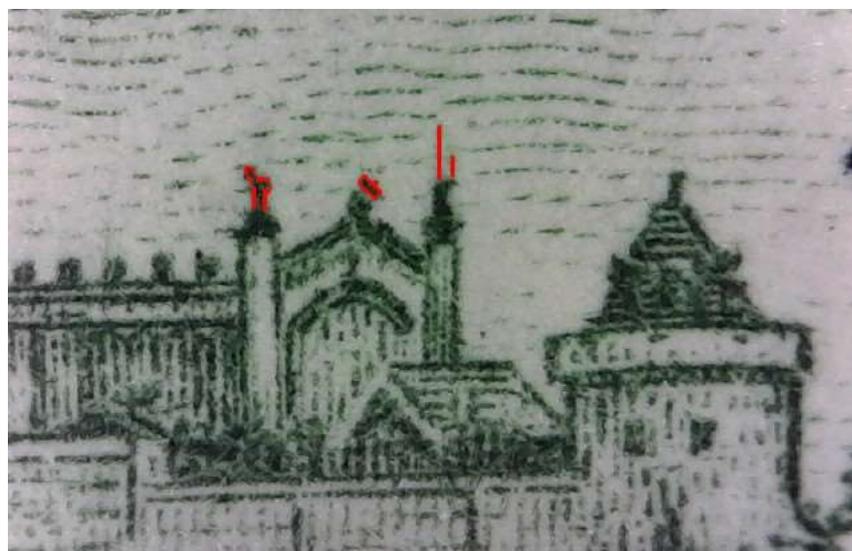
Lightning conductors have been found on 21 different 1935 Silver Jubilee stamps. These stamps are a bit rare, generally commanding interest from collectors at auction. A list of these varieties is provided below. There previously have never been any lightning conductors discovered on the British Guiana Jubilee stamps. Furthermore, there have never been any findings of lightning conductor pairs on any 1935 Silver Jubilee stamps. There have been a number Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. printed Jubilee stamps with lightning conductors found on a spire of St. George's Chapel (see images below). No such upright lightning rod stamps have ever been found printed by De La Rue. The De La Rue varieties are all with diagonal lines extending upwards.



*Twin Lightning Rods*



*Normal Wallace J34*

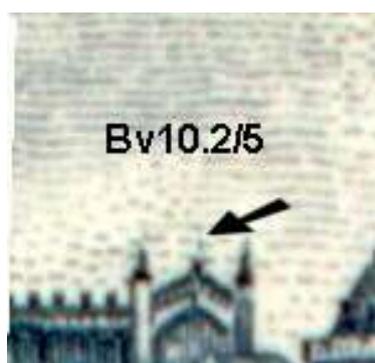
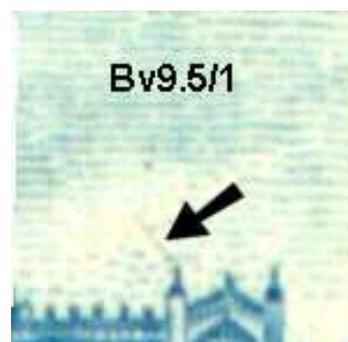
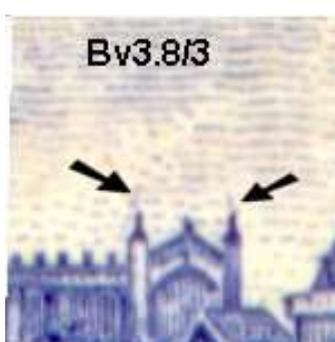
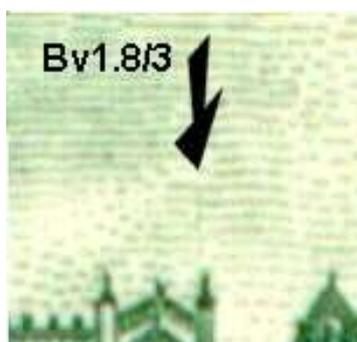


*All Unusual Features Highlighted*

The J35 stamp's twin lightning conductors appear on the rightmost spire of St. George's Chapel. Both conductors are parallel to each other and extend straight upwards. These do not appear to be printing errors. There are known Silver Jubilee stamp varieties with lightning rods on the rightmost spire of St. George's Chapel, but none with twin rods. It is recognized engineering practice to position of lightning rods should on the highest point of a structure. The Wallace J34 twin lightning rods are in such a position on the St. George's chapel spire. Generally, most lightning conductors on other Jubilee stamp varieties are poorly positioned from an engineering perspective. No engineer would ever place rods on such spots on building structures. One could imagine that the stamp designer/engraver had a background in electricity, while the same cannot be said for the designers of the other lightning conductor stamps. One could also argue that the lightning rods were engraved on the spire just by chance. That said, side-by-side lightning conductors are not standard engineering practice. I therefore opine that the shorter of the two "lightning conductors" is actually a radio antenna. The King most probably required Windsor Castle at the time to be outfitted with rapidly emerging Marconi radio technology in order to communicate with London in case telephone landlines went down, especially as hostilities with Germany were on the rise at the time. It is also appropriate that any radio antenna also would be placed at the highest spot on a structure. Since engineers and Windsor Castle staff were probably already servicing or installing these devices, it makes sense that both the lightning conductor and the radio antenna both were placed together at the same high place on the chapel spire.

*Some Currently Known St. George Lightning Conductor Varieties*

Stamp printer Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Limited produced several of the currently known St. George Chapel lightning conductor stamps, which appear in the images below.



Recognized Stanley Gibbons Flagstaff Varieties

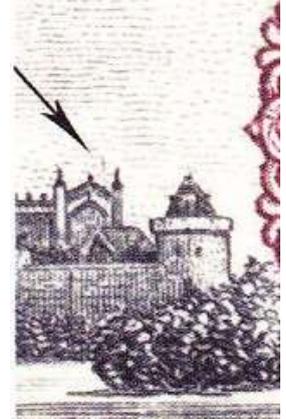
Stanley Gibbons Ltd. recognizes a number of flagstaff and lightning rod varieties in the 1935 Silver Jubilee series. Examples of these appear below.



*Extra flagstaff  
Plate 1 R. 9/1*



*Short extra flagstaff  
Plate 2 R. 2/1*



*Lightning Conductor  
Plate 3 R. 2/5*



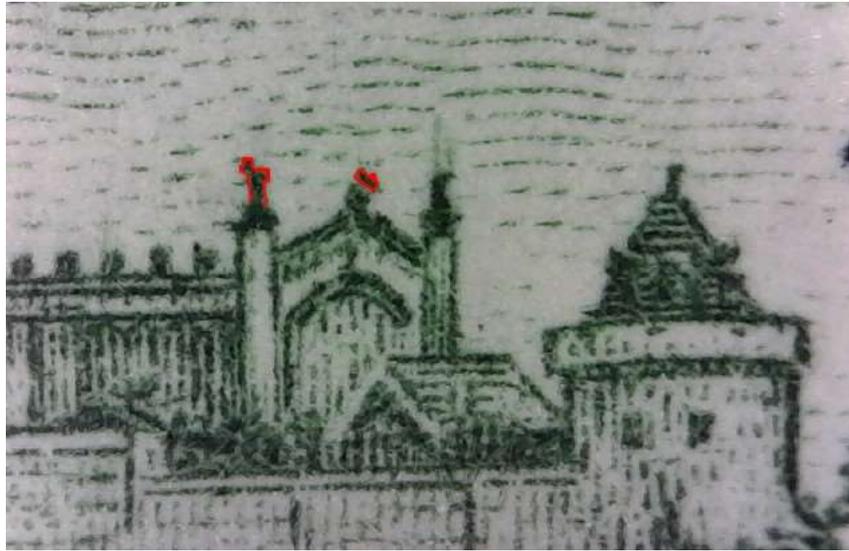
*Flagstaff on Turret  
Plate 5 R. 7/1*



*Double Flagstaff  
Plate 6 R. 5/2*

The Crooked Turret and Weathervane on St. George Chapel

And now back to the British Guiana error stamp. Aside from the double lightning rods, or lightning rod/radio antenna, stamp attribute, St. George's tower has two other noteworthy features.



*The Crooked Turret and Weathervane on St. George Chapel*

### The Crooked Turret

The J34 stamp crooked turret on St. George's chapel is a unique feature. I have found no reference to anything similar on any other Silver Jubilee stamp. The shape of the turret and its deformation is quite unusual. The turret clearly bends to the right. This does not appear to be an ink error. The turret is actually separated into two pieces with a clear delineation between the lower and the upper parts. The two turret pieces follow the same curvature to the right. The separation between the two turret pieces indicates that the turret deformation was not a result of unintended continuous ink flow. The upper portion of the turret is rectangular in shape and appears as a clear stamp plate imprint.

### The Weathervane on Left Spire on St. George's Chapel

The leftmost spire on St. George Chapel is deformed. My conclusion on this deformation is that it may be a result of excess ink. I will have to defer to experts on this matter. I am not qualified to attribute the imprint as a result of some unusual specific plate design feature. One thought as to the stamp logic is that a weathervane is sitting on top of the spire or a large bird (a hawk or eagle of some type) were perching itself on top of the spire. It is an interest feature on an already complex stamp.

## Conclusion

The issues pertaining to this J34 stamp are open to debate. I do not believe that there has been any exhaustive study of or search for twin lightning rod Wallace J34 stamps. Whether this stamp is representative of a new “variety” is an opinion that will have to be rendered by philatelic experts. Regardless of that outcome, this stamp at minimum adds to the charm, beauty and ongoing fascination with the amazing 1935 Silver Jubilee series.

SW – February 2021

## Tailpiece

The whimsy apart, if readers’ observations tally with Sewall’s chapel marks, we’d like to hear about them, particularly if they give an indication of plate/sheet position.