



Lot 56

## LOT 56°

**This magnificent pair of the rare 24¢ 1861 Steel Blue with full corner sheet selvage and original gum is so extraordinarily fresh and of such superb quality, it has often been used as the gold standard for the shade and issue**

**ESTIMATE \$50,000-75,000**

## DESCRIPTION

**24¢ Steel Blue (70b)**, Positions 1-2L6, horizontal pair with **full top left corner sheet selvage**, original gum, very lightly hinged, incredibly deep rich color and proof-like impression, each stamp perfectly centered with wide and well-balanced margins

## PROVENANCE

Siegel Auction Galleries, 1982 Rarities of the World, 4/24/1982, Sale 596, lot 210, to Robinson as agent for Klein

Walter C. Klein, Christie's Robson Lowe sale, 6/15-16/1988, lot 48, to Chang as agent for Drucker

Drucker Family, Siegel Auction Galleries, 10/9/2002, Sale 851, lot 79, to William H. Gross

## CENSUS, LITERATURE AND EXHIBITION REFERENCES

World Stamp Show 2016 Court of Honor (Gross)

## CERTIFICATION

British Philatelic Association (1962—no longer accompanies)

Giulio Bolaffi (3/21/1966)

The Philatelic Foundation (1982 and 2002)

## CONDITION NOTES

Extremely Fine Gem pair—superb and flawless

## HISTORY AND COMMENTARY

**The Meaning of Post Office Fresh**

The rarest of the myriad 24¢ 1861 shades are the Steel Blue (Scott 70b) and Violets (Scott 70c and 70d). Unlike the fugitive Violet shades, the Steel Blue is usually stable and readily distinguishable. Apart from the Blackish Violet (78c), the Steel Blue is the rarest in original-gum condition, and multiples are exceedingly rare. We record the following:

- 1 **Block of six**, original gum, sound, ex Worthington, Caspary, "European Connoisseur" (Siegel Auction Galleries, 12/15/2015, Sale 1115, lot 2220)
- 2 **Block of four**, original gum, perfs trimmed off bottom right, ex Duveen, Hind, Sinkler, Lilly, last offered in 1991 Rarities of the World, 4/20/1991, Sale 737, lot 387
- 3 **Horizontal pair**, Positions 1-2L6 with top left corner sheet margins, original gum, sound, ex Klein and Drucker, Siegel Auction Galleries, 10/9/2002, Sale 851, lot 79, **the pair offered in this sale**

A third block, with top sheet selvage, ex Henry C. Gibson, Sr., was offered in our 1974 Rarities of the World sale (Sale 448, lot 61), but since then it has been broken into singles.

Although we are compelled to write first about multiples, which are rare artifacts, condition is what sets this pair on a pedestal. Each of the two stamps is absolutely superb. The color is rich and true to the distinctive Steel Blue shade. All of the perforations are full, and the paper is crisp and bright. Unlike many original-gum stamps, the gum on this pair is lightly hinged and free of the messy hinge removal marks that affect so many classic stamps. And, as if the stamps alone were not enough to excite even the most jaded collector, the presence of full corner sheet selvage adds a finishing touch.

While the demand for single original-gum examples of this rarity is very strong, we fear that collectors who feel bound to the small area of an album space will pass by this pair, allowing the price to dip into "arbitrage" territory, where the temptation to break it into two singles overcomes any sense of ethical responsibility to preserve this important artifact. We hope it does not suffer the fate of the Gibson block, and we encourage collectors to find a different album page to accommodate this extraordinary pair (we will be happy to make one for the buyer).

This pair first appeared in the U.S. market in the 1982 Rarities of the World sale, where it was snapped up by Norman A. Robinson for Walter C. Klein's collection. When the Klein collection was sold in a 1988 Christie's Robson Lowe auction, another expert dealer, Albert Chang, outbid everyone to secure it for his clients, the Druckers. Finally, in the 2002 Siegel sale of the Drucker collection, yet another professional who knows enough to appreciate the quality of this pair, Charles Shreve, bought it for Mr. Gross. ■