

*Perfection is attained by slow degrees; it requires the hand of time.*

– Voltaire

Voltaire's words perfectly describe how Dr. F. Christian Killien, whose collection is featured in Part I of this sale catalogue, approached stamp collecting. I have met few collectors who love their stamps as much as Dr. Killien, or who have followed his credo that if a stamp is worth collecting, it is worth finding in the finest available condition, whether it catalogues one dollar or ten thousand dollars. And, if finding just the right stamp requires ten, twenty or even thirty years of searching, Dr. Killien believes it is worth the wait.

In United States philately, Dr. Killien's name is synonymous with “gem” quality. His United States collection, which I had the privilege of selling in 2006, set a new standard of collecting U.S. stamps in extraordinary condition – stamps that possess outstanding centering, marvelous overall freshness and brilliance – and in Mint Never Hinged state if at all possible. Although Dr. Killien sold his U.S. stamps, he remained deeply committed to expanding his cherished collection of worldwide stamps, his lifelong favorite. For more than thirty years he has sought exceptional quality stamps of Great Britain, British Commonwealth (A to Z – being essentially complete for many countries from King George V, or earlier, through the first QEII issues), France and French Colonies (A to Z – also being essentially complete for many countries from 1892 to independence).

Just a casual perusal of this catalogue's individual stamp highlights will reveal how successful Dr. Killien was in obtaining stamps in essentially perfect condition. Is every stamp a “rarity” in his collection? No, but there are countless “condition rarities.” For this reason, we believe that Dr. Killien's collection has a unique character among the countless collections sold in past auctions. Furthermore, Dr. Killien sought much more than the “easy” stamps in gem quality. A close look at his specialized sections of Bermuda Keyplate issues, Falkland Islands, New Zealand Postal Fiscal Arms issues and St. Pierre and Miquelon F.N.F. L. stamps will show that he accepted some of stamp collecting's toughest challenges, and achieved his goals.

Yes, the many hundreds of single stamps and sets offered in the sale are exciting and desirable, but that is not the whole offering. Dr. Killien's collection balances from each country, which follow the individually offered stamps, represent an equal or even greater collecting accomplishment. Each of these collection lots is not only comprehensive for its respective time period, but all are filled with stamps that are almost impossible to duplicate in such a high standard of overall quality – and the number of never hinged stamps contained in each is most remarkable.

It is no coincidence that the collections are filled with outstanding stamps. Each was personally selected and vetted by Dr. Killien over three decades of collecting. Once he owned a stamp or set, it was subject to upgrading if he found a better one. It was not unheard of for him to buy one gem set of a scarce issue of a particular country, only to buy a second, or even a third, just to upgrade the lower values. To fully illustrate what I am referring to – and to motivate potential bidders – we have scanned each and every large lot, and the links to these may be found on our website ([www.siegelauctions.com](http://www.siegelauctions.com)).

Just having Dr. Killien's stamps in auction would be exciting enough. But, Part II of our December auction is filled with more than 750 lots from an additional 50-plus consignors, comprising a wonderfully diverse range of scarce stamps, postal history and desirable large lots and collections. So, we urge collectors and dealers to look at both Parts I and II of the sale catalogue, as you may find things of personal interest in each section. All in all, this is an auction we think will excite collectors.

— CHARLES F. SHREVE