

The Colony of Newfoundland's commemoration issue of
The 350th Anniversary of Annexation by Great Britain

commonly known as

The Gilbert Issue of 1933

This exhibit presents a study of the set of stamps issued for public use by the Colonial Government of Newfoundland on August 3, 1933. The set is comprised of 14 denominations with 14 different designs depicting various scenes relating to Sir Humphrey Gilbert and his historic voyage of 1583.



First Day Cover showing the complete set of 14 denominations

The Historical Context of the Gilbert Voyage

Devonshire fisherman, known as West Country Men had been frequenting Newfoundland's shores as early as 1498. They were renowned fishermen and were fishing Icelandic-Greenland waters for a century or more before that and paying duties for the right. Expansion west made for better profits without duties. Basque, Spanish, Portuguese, and French fishermen also fished Newfoundland's waters and put ashore there to dry their catch. The West Country fleet numbered between 50 and 100 ships through the early 1500's. The other countries set sail between 400 and 500 ships annually with as many as 10,000 persons on board. The few but feisty West Country Men were feared pirates. They managed to control the fish trade and secured payments from the other fleets for permission to land in Newfoundland to prepare their catches. This payment was usually in the form of salt. Free trade was enjoyed by all. By 1522 there were permanent year round settlements scattered about the island. mostly inhabited by those engaged in trade with the fishermen, who would provision their ships with fresh meat. By the mid 1500's large numbers of fishermen, carpenters, blacksmiths and the like, from all these countries, lived year round in Newfoundland, spending the winters hunting as well as harvesting lumber needed for ship repairs.

All this did not go unnoticed by Queen Elizabeth and parliament, as they were not reaping the profit they thought they ought to. Enter Devonshire son Sir Walter Raleigh, in 1577, a noted favorite of the Queen and half brother of Humphrey Gilbert. Spain was starting to provide armed convoys to the fishermen and England decided the best course of action would be to make a legal claim to Newfoundland. If the island were to come under the control of a foreign power her tenuous hold in the new world could be in serious jeopardy. Raleigh persuaded Elizabeth to annex the island and Gilbert was chosen to do the job. Thus were the early beginnings of England's colonization period which would eventually spread throughout the world, ultimately establishing the British Empire.

PLAN

The title page introduces the Gilbert Issue.

Page two consists of this plan, notes on the issue, the printing, perforations and watermarks.

Commencing with page three the exhibit is assembled into chapters with each denomination, from lowest to highest, heading each chapter.

Each chapter will begin with notes on the design and then show die proofs in black AND issued colours.

Chapters will then show the issued stamps in blocks, illustrating the perforations.

Orientation of watermarks will be indicated on shown stamps.

Varieties abound in each chapter, from the known to the unknown as well as unique one of a kind errors.

Chapters will end with notes on the rates and covers showing those rates. (where applicable).

Following the denominations there is a chapter devoted to the SPECIMEN perforated stamps.

Conclusion of the exhibit follows the specimen chapter.

Items of rarity in the exhibit will be outlined in red. Red text indicates items of significance.
Complete sets of die proofs in black and issued colours highlight the exhibit

The Stamp Issue

The Gilbert Issue was designed, engraved and printed by Perkins Bacon Co. under a contract from John Dickinson & Company. It went on sale August 3, 1933 and was available for less than 5 months with the stamps being withdrawn from public sale on December 31, 1933. They were printed in limited quantities and in use concurrently with the Definitive Issue which was in use from January 1932 through May 1937. Thus, the Gilbert Issue is one of the scarcer Newfoundland Issues.

The lower denominations had common usage rates and covers showing single use are relatively common.

The five cent stamp had quite a short press run and mixed frankings for five cents are very common. The higher denominations had a limited use in so far as rates are concerned, mainly for parcels. Much of the available material showing single use of the higher denominations is either philatelic in nature or on first day covers, thus covers showing single use are rare. While the Gilbert stamps were withdrawn from sale, they were still in use for a number of years, especially the lower denominations.

The Printing

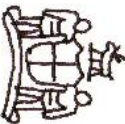
For all stamps of the Gilbert Issue, Perkins Bacon used sheets of 100 subjects in ten rows of ten. The sheets are all comb perfed 13 1/2 x 13 1/2. Seven stamps were also line perfed 14 x 14 (7, 9, 10, 14, 20, 24 and 32 cents).

The Watermark

The stamp paper provided by the supplier was watermarked with the Colony Coat of Arms. The watermark is centered on each stamp on the sheet.



On the stamps of horizontal design, the watermark is positioned to be centered on each stamp with the nose of the caribou facing left when viewed from the front.



The vertical designs have the watermark turned 90 degrees clockwise with the nose pointing up, as illustrated to the left.

All the stamps exist with the watermark inverted and are fairly common. The watermark may also be found, rarely, in a reversed position as well as an inverted reversed position. i.e. comparing the example at upper left, on a normal reversed watermark the caribou head would still be at the top but the nose would be pointing right; on an inverted reversed watermark the caribou head would be to the bottom with the nose pointing left.

*Sample of Watermarked Paper
used by Perkins Bacon Co.*