

Confederation

The Newsletter of the Large and Small Queens Study Group

Number 20

December 2001

Plating the 8 Cent Small Queen

The Rules of Registration

Richard Morris has referred us to the Post Office rules and regulation regarding the use of postage stamps for registration.

Post Office Department, Ottawa 8th May 1889, "The fee for the Registration of a letter or other article of mail matter will be five cents upon all classes of correspondence passing within the Dominion. For the present and until further instructed, the registration fee may be prepaid by using the 2-cent Registration Stamps and Postage stamps to make up the amount."

Further to all Canadian Post Offices on August 1, 1893,

"A new postage stamp of the value of 8¢ is now being put into circulation. This stamp will be available for the prepayment either of registration fee and postage combined, or of postage only. The 5¢ registration stamp, when the present supply is exhausted, will be withdrawn."

This should clarify the questions about postage stamps for registration occurring before the 8¢ was commissioned.

by R. W. Cumming

Plate identification is made difficult by a number of factors. These include rapid wear on the plates, poor plate maintenance, and occasional over- or under-inking. Cancellations are often a hindrance on used stamps.

Based on a study of the way stamp colour and perforation spacing changed during the period of use, it is probable that two plates were usually used together on the press, making one sheet of 400 subjects.

Some Plate 4 stamps have a unique shade suggesting that a single pane of 200 was also used at times. (Because of the relatively small number of 8¢ stamps being used, it does not seem likely that the printer would set up two presses with an 8¢ plate at the same time).

All of the 8¢ stamps were printed between July 1893 and March 1897, although their use continued into 1898, with a few strays in 1899. The basic facts are that Plates 1 and 2 were used at the beginning. A few plate 3 stamps can be found from July 1894, but mostly from and after March 1895 when Plate 1 was retired. Plate 1 was used later, but that may have been accidental.

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Plating the 8¢ SQ

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Plate 4 may have been used for a small test run in 1895 (light bluish) but saw no regular use until late 1896 (deep slate and later black). Most Plate 4 stamps are black or grey black.

The colour of the printings varied enough that colour can be used as a clue when identifying plates. The amount of plate wear is also an indication. Wear took place so quickly that there is little to separate Plate 1 from Plate 2. Thus it is unlikely that one will be certain of the plating of every stamp.

Each plate had certain unique characteristics at first printing. Plate 1 was badly worn. (How this could occur is not known.) Plate 2 was only slightly worn. The wear is not uniform over the plates so that the best stamps from Plate 1 may be as good as the worst from Plate 2. Some Plate 3 stamps can be mistaken for Plate 2 and vice versa. Some Plate 4 stamps can be taken for Plate 3.

In spite of the problems, an examination procedure can be followed that will identify the plate in most cases. A 10x magnification will be needed unless your eyes are much better than mine.

Here is a general description of the four plates as they first appeared.

Plate 1 stamps have areas in the vignette of disorganized background and the lettering of "CANADA POSTAGE" is often broken and/or mottled. The eye iris is a blob rather than vertical lines. The horizontal side bars are filled solid for three quarters to full height. The N of "CANADA" and the O of "POSTAGE" are often broken.

Plate 2 has background lines intact, as well as the lettering, but has relatively weak hair and eye lines. Deterioration of these features occurs in later printings. The vertical eye lines are seen and the side bars usually are not full solid. The right end of the top bar of the E in "POSTAGE" is rounded most of the time.

Plate 3 has sharp, strong lines throughout, but thickening with age. The E in "POSTAGE" has a square corner at top right. The side bars are clean horizontal lines in early printings and never reach more than 50% solid. The plate must have been used before final erasure of guide lines because many can be found in the earlier printings.

Plate 4 appears to be the same as Plate 3, but was mainly used at the end of the printing period when Plate 3 was worn. The last vertical of the N in "CANADA" is marginally thicker than for Plate 3. This feature can be seen in a few of the light blue colour, but I have not yet tried to separate them from Plate 3.

Some printing conditions may affect the appearance of a stamp and lead to its mistaken identity.

Overinking will cause vertical wavy lines.

Underinking will give a shadowy or broken look to the stamp detail.

If the ink is too thin it will be absorbed by the paper making the stamp look smeary.

Improper plate cleaning will make the stamps seem underinked.

If the paper is too moist the ink will spread. If too dry it may look underinked.

Plate wear will remove the finer detail lines.

Plate corrosion will make the lines broader and rougher.

There was one die for the 8¢ but there were two images on the transfer roll. I believe one image was used to produce Plates 1 and 2 and the other was used for Plates 3 and 4.

Identifying the Stamps

The following procedure will be useful for the person with half a dozen or more of the stamps. For those with fewer, knowledgeable help may be required.

Take a blank sheet of paper and make four circles equally spaced at the top. Make another row of three circles below at the gaps. Make a third row of circle below that. Label the top four 1, 2, 3, and 4. This is for each of the plates. Label the next row 1-2, 2-3, and 3-4. This is for stamps of uncertain plating. Label the third row A, B, and C. These are for initial sorting.

Put all of the stamps with sharp to clear background lines into the A pile. Put all of the stamps that are badly printed in the B pile. Put all of the remaining stamps in the C pile.

The easiest pile to deal with is A. Assume that only Plate 3 was used until the last few months of printing, when Plate 4 was put into service. Thus the early slates, blues, and later mauves and violet blacks in this group are mostly Plate 3.

There will be some grey black to dark grey stamps after extracting the more colourful ones. These are from Plate 4. Sort through the dark green (slate) stamps and pull out any with

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Plating the 8 SQ

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clear, sharp lines. These are also Plate 4.

The B pile has all of the Plate 1 stamps and those of Plates 2 and 3 with printing flaws. Pick out the Plate 2 and 3 printing flaws and divide them into their respective plate piles.

The C pile contains stamps from the first three plates (not many from Plate 1) and is the most difficult to sort. The best method might be to put the slate and black on spot A and return the remainder to C.

Sort through the C pile and see whether any of them have Plate 1 distinguishing features. Put them on that pile. A few Plate 3 stamps may be lurking here as well. Put them on their pile and the remainder on the Plate 2 pile.

The A pile should contain stamps only from plates 2 and 3. These should separate relatively easily by the "CANADA POSTAGE" lettering using the guidelines mentioned above.

There still may be a problem. You have not been able to decide which plate to assign to some of the stamps, so you have placed them on the undecided spots on the second row. There are two ways of dealing with them.

The easiest method is to guess. You will be right 50% of the time. The second method is to compare them with the stamps you have positively identified to see whether they have more of the characteristics of one plate than the other.

There is one other distinguishing feature that may separate Plates 1 and 2 from Plates 3 and 4. Under the clasp at the back of the head there are three white

lines. They are longer in Plates 3 and 4, and a longer white hairline beside them extending onto the neck is clearly doubled for 3 and 4. Take care, because the occasional Plate 2 may also have the longer lines.

Good sorting.

Editor's Column

Roy Sass

It's about time I did another newsletter. My brother's death earlier this year threw me for a loop and I'm just now getting back to hobbies.

Earlier in the year I received a letter from the APS asking if I was interested in submitting our "significant publication in the field" to their literature contest at the summer APS show in Chicago. I thought I would give it a try.

The entry was to be a year's worth of issues, for which I entered newsletters #15, 16, 17, and 18. The payoff for me was the written critique that would come after the judging.

Our newsletter won a **bronze medal**.

Regarding content the judges said the newsletter was too narrow in scope for the general collector but probably well-suited for its intended audience.

They said we needed more research articles and more illustrations for each story.

This is where you come in - send me articles; send me illustrations - so I can improve the content of each newsletter.

The also made comments about the layout, page numbering, masthead and the like. This is

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The Mystery of Pond's Blob

The "Ball in Corner" Variety of the 3-Cent Small Queen
by Dr. Steven Perch

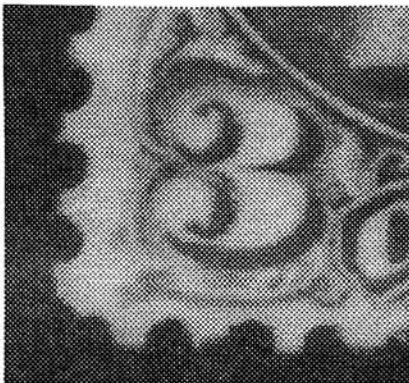
The 3¢ Small Queen stamp is a rich area for study of plate varieties and flaws. One of my favorite varieties has always been the "ball-in-corner."

I have collected twelve copies which exhibit this same major constant plate variety. All twelve have a prominent "blob" or "ball" in the lower left corner margin adjacent to the numeral 3. The "ball" is especially striking since it is visible without any magnification.

All twelve seem to be Montreal printings (Scott #37) and three have dated cancels (Nov. 16, 1876, St. Joseph, Quebec; Jan. 18, 1878 Montreal; Feb. 25, 1878). Eight are perf 12 and four are perf 11.5x12. To my knowledge, the copy dated Nov. 16, 1876, is the earliest reported cancel on this variety.

I am disappointed that Hans Reiche and Mike Sendbuehler's excellent book "Constant Plate Varieties of the Canada Small Queens" (3rd revised edition, 1991) fails to mention this variety.

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The Blob

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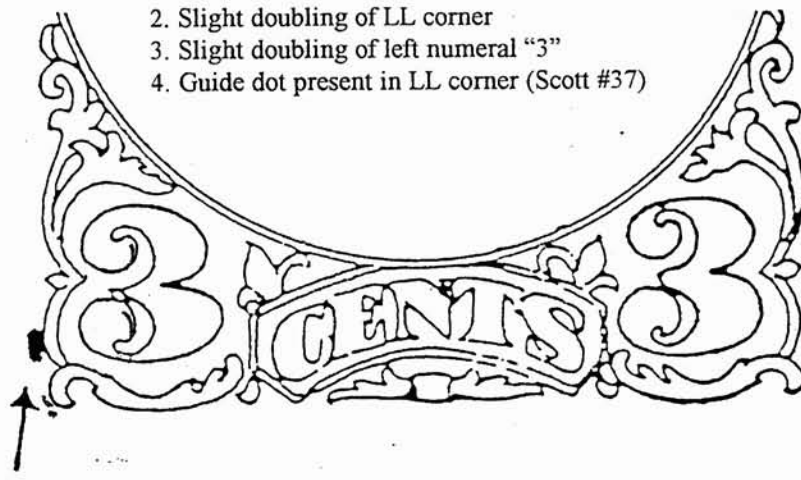
Although it does not appear to be a purposeful re-entry, the "blob" is clearly a major constant plate variety worthy of a listing in "R&S." The defect has an engraved appearance and is not just a transient inking variety.

The omission of this variety is particularly surprising since it was previously described in George Pond's article "Constant Plate Varieties of Canada 3¢ Small Queens" (BNA Topics, March 1965 and later republished in the first newsletter of the BNAPS Small Queens Study Group, Vol. 1 No. 1, February 1976).

In this article, Mr. Pond illustrated nine different major plate varieties on the 3¢ small queen. The "blob" variety was given the distinction of "No. 1" and was characterized as having a very noticeable "heavy blob to the left and in the margin of the West Three" visible to the naked eye.

He also noted that stamps of this variety share other minor constant plate defects including slight doubling of (1) the lower West corner, (2) the West Three, and (3) the letters CEN of cents.

1. "Blob" located outside lower left side's frame
2. Slight doubling of LL corner
3. Slight doubling of left numeral "3"
4. Guide dot present in LL corner (Scott #37)



BLOB

The 1965 BNA Topics article mentions this variety is on Montreal printings circa 1877-1879, and cites the existence of copies with dated cancels (Oct. 27, 1877; Feb. 15, 1878; Apr. 2, 1878; Sept. 30, 1878; and a copy dated 1879).

I have examined my twelve copies under strong magnification (10x) for the other characteristics mentioned by Mr. Pond. This confirms the slight doubling of the lower left corner and the numeral 3, but I cannot verify any doubling in the letters CEN of cents.

Any further information from our readers would be greatly appreciated (i.e., other references, dated cancels, plate position if known), or any explanation for the mysterious disappearance of Pond's Blob in the "R&S" text.

Editor's column

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result of having an older computer and an obsolete (yet functional) desktop publishing program.

While putting this newsletter together I noticed John Hillson said that printing plates were first hardened for the Admiral issue and Jim Watt said they were first hardened for the earlier Edwards. I trust someone (or several members) will write with clarification.

We've had discussions on when the Registered Letter Stamps were required, or preferred, (see Richard Morris's comments on page 1) or obsolete after the introduction of the 8¢ SQ. There seem to be covers extant to support every theory.

My guess is that some postal patrons and some postal clerks liked to break the rules just for the fun of it or to tweak some higher level bureaucrat. The covers that don't fit the regulations probably are due to people then (as now) not following the rules.

I was in Paris on vacation in early October and I went to the outdoor stamp bourse just off the Champs Elysees at Rue de Montigny.

There were about 20 dealers, each under a little tent, with boxes and boxes of covers and postal history, with new issues from France and the former French Community, and the topical new issues from every small country and island in the world.

They had small collections of common used

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Chairman's Column

Ron Ribler

This column is dedicated to all the lives that were so wantonly destroyed in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. I am sure I speak for everyone when I say our hearts go out to their families, loved ones, co-workers, and friends. We hope there will be no more senseless loss of life and treasure before this scourge is erased from the face of the earth.

Despite our great loss, life goes on and even the mundane is pursued. With that in mind, I feel it is still necessary to report to the members who could not attend what happened in Ottawa at the recent BNAPEX.

As might have been expected, this was the most heavily attended meeting in many years because of its proximity to large population centers in Canada and the US. Many more dealers attended than usual and the banquet tables filled the ballroom. It was great to see old friends and make some new ones.

Our study Group meeting was well attended and John Burnett and Richard Morris made presentations, while David Berner discussed his search for earliest known dates of the 2-ring cancels, and John Milks raised questions relative to color identification and definition.

Other attendees were Gar Porter from Toronto, Pierre Thibaudeau, a new member from Chesterville, ON, Bill Wegman from Manotick, ON, Ian Kimmerly from Ottawa, Gordon Smith from Botswana, Jack Forbes, Jr.

from Dartmouth, NS, Dave Lacelle from Merville, BC, Hal Kellett from Saskatoon, SK, Tom Harb from Ottawa, and David Goldsmith from Woodstock, GA. Some members took advantage of the tours around the area. The weather was delightful most of the time and, as far as I could tell, everyone seemed to be having a good time.

The exhibits were of high quality and well received. No palmares was issued at the meeting, but I am sure it will be in one of the publications and on the BNAPS web site. The dealers seemed to be busy all the time, although I don't know if they considered the show worth their while economically.

New members are coming into our Study Group all the time and I would like to welcome all of them and encourage them to contribute to our newsletter in any way they can, by asking questions, commenting on other articles, writing articles about any aspect of our subject, etc. Roy welcomes all input. Keep it coming.

Wanted

Large Queen cancels wanted by collector, any type but dated preferred, single stamp or collection.

Write to Ben Cohen,
748 Niagara Street,
Winnipeg, MB R3N 0W3,
or email orecl@escape.ca

This and That

Thank you, Mrs. Greene

Jim Watt provided some interesting information on the cover on page 5 of newsletter 18, and why this cover even exists.

Vincent Graves Greene's mother's maiden name was Schmalz and she lived in Berlin (now Kitchener) Ontario. She had rafts of Cape of Good Hope triangles etc. addressed to her and her parents which Mr. Greene sold off in 1925 before he started avidly to collect covers.

The reason this cover survives is Mr. Greene. Interesting, isn't it?



Commentary

by John Hillson

Printing Costs

Regarding Jack Gordon's query re the replacement of Large by Small Queens, I was a bit surprised to see the old chestnut about the reason being a recession still around. I wish somebody would explain the logic.

The facts are quite simple. Throughout the period one only has to look at the constant rise in the number of stamps needed and issued to see the printers were under pressure.

The way to cope with increasing demand is to increase production - which is to state the obvious but it is a point that seems to be missed too often. How? Buy more presses and take on staff is one way, but the BABNCo was clearly cramped for space in Ottawa. It was not an option at the time.

To speed up production with the equipment you have is another way. By reducing the size of the stamps the hand operations involved (inking, etc.) would be a little quicker.

The original Small Queen plates we now know were single pane 100 subject plates. It doesn't take a genius to realize that given the size of the printing presses, one could now print off two plates at once, using a wooden form if necessary to hold them steady.

The logical progression from that was the making of the twin-pane plates when they had a perforator that could cope with the plates of 200 subjects being 20 stamps across. In other words, technological innovation.

Introducing the 1/2¢ SQ

Now a comment on the interesting article on the Half-Cent Small Queen, could I take issue with the assertion that the Small Queens were introduced to help reduce printing costs?

If that were so, why did it take so long - and in the case of the 15 Cents, never.

I believe the reason for the reduction in size was to speed up production. That in itself would reduce costs which eventually the BABNCo. was forced to pass on, but it is not significant. First, the Large Queens were not replaced until the plates were clapped out.

Second, in spite of being the first Small Queen to be designed and proofed, the One Cent did not appear until after the Three Cents, yet the Post Office had a supply of the former just a little ahead of the latter.

In other words, the higher the demand for a particular value, the sooner it was in the hands of the public.

Imperfs

Another point that may be of interest regarding "imperfs between." Knowing that I have a vertical pair, John Jamieson asked me if it had any blind perfs, as he had never seen any verticals that hadn't. Well, mine is the same, a couple of blind perfs at each edge. My horizontals show no such and are completely devoid of any impression left by a perforator.

Dated Covers

I was amused by John Burnett saying that rarely would one find a legible postmark on a 1/2 Cent cover.

A few years ago our postman delivered one to me from a successful bid in a Canadian auction with a demand from HM Customs for something like £35. Now VAT is levied on all imports into this country from non-EU countries at 17 1/2% on top of all costs including the postage, let alone the hammer price plus the premium.

But the Half-Cent Small Queen was issued in 1882, wasn't it, so I should have only been charged 2 1/2% - items over 100 years old. I was ready to do battle until I looked at the clearly dated postmark - 1898. This was in 1997 so I was sunk and had to cough up - except that the cheque never did get put through my bank account, so perhaps there is justice afterall.

This and That

El Supremo (AKA Horace Harrison) wanted to remind us that after January 1889, Registered Letter Stamps were preferred but not required. The cover illustrated is dated JA 12 89, from Picton NS, and has the 2 cent registry fee paid by two one-cent SQs.



Bill Longley's auction catalog #4 verifies that the 2¢ Small Queen and the 5¢ Registered Letter Stamp were printed on the same presses at the same time. This is proven by offsets on the back of each value. Bill says that it is important to note that the offset is directly on the paper, beneath the gum. As the sheets were printed, ungummed stamps were stacked wet on top of each other. Illustrated here are a small queen showing portions of two RLS's and a RLS showing portions of 3 SQ's. Bill says that there are less than 5 reported examples of each.

Study Group Chairman Ron Ribler notes there also are examples of the 3¢ Small Queen and the 5¢ Registered Letter Stamp that show the same type of offset.



Letters and Comments on the Mysteries of the 8¢ Small Queen

I really enjoyed Cumming's article on the Eight Cents Small Queen. Too little is written about that stamp and it is generally treated as a stepchild.

In response to the article I have a couple of comments regarding the "mysteries." As you know, I do color guides for the Large and Small Queens. I am convinced that the color of the eight cents SQ is not a coincidence.

The colors and shades of the stamp reflect the colors and shades of the 15¢ Large Queen which was still being printed in the period. These Large Queens began with the reddish purples and violet greys, but the later printings were in the grey blues, some very pale, and the slate blues. The clear deep violet of the LQ approaches the violet black and blackish purples of the last printings of the eight cents stamp.

I am also convinced that Hillson was right in assuming that the portrait facing left instead of facing right with an oval instead of a round frame was intentional to call attention to the fact that this was a new stamp with a specific purpose of combining postage and registration. The Queen's head faces left on every revenue stamp. This new stamp was more than simple postage and the change reflects that.

Also some decision may have been made by those responsible after con-

versation with the Queen because from that time on, in both the Maple Leaf and Numeral issues which followed, the portrait faces left.

As for using the ABN die for the vignette, I have fly-specked the Nova Scotia stamps and the first issue of the Bill Stamp and the 8¢ SQ, and the latter is different in all kinds of ways. They are similar but they are also very different. It seems to me that it is more than just some re-engraving of the die. The BABN certainly had enough notice of the change with a large inventory of RLS stamps on hand in the post office to execute a new die.

Richard M. Morris

Could I perhaps comment on one or two of the articles in the March 2001 newsletter as the thought crossed my mind that occasionally our contributors were determined not to let facts stand in the way of a good speculation but perhaps I am being unkind.

The Eight Cents was subject to an order posted in all Canadian post offices on August 1, 1893, to the effect that it was to pay postage and registration, or postage only. The real mystery to me is why it never seems to have been used for destinations abroad. I checked the Firby/Willson Posted Letter

Guide to see if there were any such.

Naturally they would be in combination to make up the generally two cents deficiency for registered letters to members of the U.P.U. Nor to be fair was I able to find a valuation for a double weight domestic registered letter (8¢+3¢) which was a bit of a blow as I would like to think the 25 shillings I paid for mine was a good buy.

The second real mystery is why, in spite of its being valid for ordinary post, it rarely seem to have been used, although again it could have been in combination for heavier letters than the norm. Perhaps Mr. Cumming could shed some light on these imponderables in a follow-up article.

As to the Mysteries enumerated:

1) In the second edition of "Small Queens" (the hard back by yours truly) I said that the likely reason was to draw attention to the fact that the stamp served a dual purpose - in fact if one thinks about it, so successful a ploy was this that its use seems to have been exclusively to prepay postage and registration.

Of course one could argue that it was belatedly to bring Canadian stamps in line with the practice throughout the rest of the British Empire, but I don't for one moment think that the Canadian Post Office was

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that sentimental, having been different for the past quarter of a century (another mystery? No, the designers had simply copied the Bradbury Wilkinson essay.)

Now I admit on the same page (71) I said there were only two plates, but in Chapter 10 of my latest opus Mr. Cumming will find that there were indeed four plates and interestingly, since the norm was three, only one transfer roll.

Why they lack imprints - goodness knows, but you can bet that if they had been subcontracted as Mr. Cumming suggest, The BABN would have ensured their imprint appeared. Wouldn't you?

In any case the plates were fixed price and they had all the skilled staff available to make the plates themselves; probably they were just saving a couple of bucks. In view of what happened in 1897 can you really see them playing "footsie" with their arch rivals?

The suggestion that the "new stamp reduced costs" is an interesting one in view of how common the 3¢ + 5¢ SQ combination is and the fact that the P.O.D. had four plates to pay for. I would have thought convenience would probably be the main reason for the issue.

Mystery #3 - unhardened steel. No mystery, no Canadian postage or revenue stamp printing plates were hardened until the First World War when they had steel shortages and coated Admiral plates with chrome to prolong their lives.

Colour. Certain colours seem to have caused the printers considerable difficulty. Starting with the

1859 10 Cents, then the Large Queen 15 Cents and following along with the 8 Cents, all three are broadly in the same family colour-wise. Another one appears to have been the 10 Cents Small Queen. If anyone hasn't read Geof Whitworth's book on the 1859 Issue, doing so should prove instructive.

Finally, how stamps have different perfs one side to its neighbor. Not that uncommon where line perforators are used, impossible with comb perforators. All that happened, usually for maintenance, a pin collar was removed and replaced with one with a slightly different pitch.

John Hillson

Regarding the questions posed by R.W. Cumming, the plates were of unhardened steel for the 8¢ Small Queen. The hardening process did not occur until the 1905 Edward Issue. Any archive statement circa 1905 may have had 1905 conditions backdated. Also no more plates were around to discuss in 1905, having already been destroyed, probably along with the Pence Issues, occurring around 1902.

The puzzle of why 1870 BABNCo proofs were not used may never be answered but it is no surprise to me that ABN Co. material was used. The answer may lie with Alfred Jones who left ABN to form BABNCo in 1867. Being the chief engraver he would have been allowed to take his material with him.

If you study the shape of the guide dots on the Pence and Cents issues in

careful detail, you will notice that many of them have a trapezoidal appearance. Even more importantly they show up in the Large Queens and some Small Queens. I call this the "Pence-Tool Margin Marks" (really it is a sideographics guide dot).

"Pence-Tool Margin Marks" are evident even on the late printings of 2¢ SQs, Second Ottawa printings of the 1890's.

Alfred Jones was an engraver almost without equal and he worked independently even after becoming vice president of BABNCo.. He worked for ABN Co. from time to time (see Boggs, p.112). Mr. Jones had the unfortunate distinction of being one of the first people killed by an automobile (accidentally killed by a taxicab in New York, April 18, 1900).

A working hypothesis about the 8¢ "major" re-entry is that it is Plate Position 192 on a plate of 200 stamps. This opinion is formed by viewing mint multiples of the right half of the sheet, the possession of a major reentry with a huge bottom margin with no subsequent design of another stamp below it, and seeing a block of four

where at least one stamp was west of it. We can say the "major" reentry is position 192 (or 193 or 194) but it is not position 191.

Perforations that are compound abound because the printers weren't too fussy about different wheels being used on the poor quality paper. Different perforations do not convince me about two different plates, just poor quality control.

Jim Watt

Editor's Column

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stamps from European countries, catalogs and supplies, and some very nice material "under the glass."

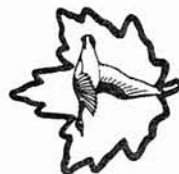
My French is not good enough to discuss and bargain with the dealers and I would have had problems converting francs quickly into US dollars to know if I was getting a good price on any selection. It should become easier to understand the prices once the Euro is in use starting in January.

I didn't buy anything but I enjoyed walking along and seeing what was for sale. This open air bourse occurs three times each week. If you take a trip to Paris I definitely would recommend a stop here.

I'll end with an interesting cover that shows that the Small Queen era is still alive. I received this from a study group member a few years ago when the postage rate from Canada to the US was 52 cents. Along with two QEII Silver Jubilee stamps there is a 2¢ green Small Queen!

The lower right corner is torn and I'm guessing there are defects on the back so this is not a collectible stamp. Yet a hundred years later it still was able to do what it was intended to do in the first place - pay postage on a letter.

One more thing -- remember that if you send in an article or a question, you get credit for a year's dues.



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