

Confederation

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One Swallow Does Not Make A Summer, But.....The Six Cents Small Queen Enigma

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Between January 1872 and May 1889 when the new plant of the British American Bank Note Co. was officially opened, some 25 million six cents Small Queens in varying shades of yellow-brown were printed. The contract that the printers had signed in 1867 stipulated, *inter alia*, that plates (which were of 100 subjects) were to be capable of printing 2,500,000 stamps before repair, and a further 1,500,000 thereafter; 4 million stamps or 40,000 sheets in all. Although the contract had been renewed several times since 1867 no change had been made to that stipulation, and indeed was not made until 1891 in the 2nd Ottawa period when 200 subject plates were the norm.

For years there has been uncertainty over the number of plates in use, in total, during the years to 1889. It certainly is highly unlikely that there were six. It is equally unlikely, as some 'experts' would have it, that a single plate, made in 1871, was responsible for virtually all the six cents stamps printed in that period, it having the check letter 'A' added at some time to make it easily distinguishable from.....what? If there is only one plate, it needs no identification letter or number. The 5c beaver of 1859 had thirty million stamps printed from it but it was repaired 10 times, as opposed to the two repairs recorded, apparently, on this 6c. Furthermore I have pointed out on a number of occasions that there are differences in the layouts of the 1871 and 'A' Plates, one example is the position of the 'dot in P variety'.



Figure 1. Early Printing Strip of Three, Mint.

Figure 3. Dot in P variety (low/weak)



Figure 2. Dot in P variety (center/strong)



Blowing away some of the cobwebs, it should be borne in mind that it had been found necessary to make two Large Queen 6c plates, distinguished one from the other by the positioning of the lower left guide dots. In 1871, two 2c plates were made, originally without check letters – the usage of the 2c at the time was comparable to that of the 6c. It is totally illogical to suppose therefore that only one 6c plate would be made and indeed there were two, and furthermore, the siderographer used the same gimmick employed with the Large Queen 6c in the placement of the lower left guide dots – except in this case something went badly wrong inlaying down the second plate which had its dot placed immediately

below the left numeral '6'. This, known as the 'Ghostly Head' plate, was set aside. A replacement was needed and a third plate was made, probably early in 1872, to which the check letter 'A' was added, it having become obvious that this was a sensible way of distinguishing plates, and indeed by this time the two 2c. plates had been given 'A' and 'B' above the centre imprints, the one lettered 'A' being above an obviously skewed imprint, which is why we know they were the same plates.

The Six Cents Small Queen Enigma *contd.*



Figure 4. "A" Plate, Used Strip of Three.

Montreal period it picked up a third and sometimes a fourth dot.

So far we have three plates, and we know that the 'Ghostly Head' plate was only used for a short time at the end of 1873 presumably as a stop-gap to meet some emergency. For the sake of argument say 10,000 sheets were printed from it – (more likely the number was in the region of 1000). In that unlikely event, 1 million of the 25 million yellow brown 6c stamps have been accounted for, leaving just 24 million for the other two plates... a somewhat tall order.

When I first had the honour of being the Society's President, the late Mr .Bill Simpson brought part of his collection of Small Queens over for the Friday night display, September 1989. There were four particularly important pieces relevant to this article. Both the extant 1871 top imprint pieces, a large block from the 'Ghostly Head' plate showing it had never been cleaned of the extraneous bits of metal thrown up in the process of entering impressions, and a further imprint piece, the position of which did not correspond either to the two 1871 pieces, nor to a 2nd Ottawa imprint block from the 'A' plate. I had hoped that it would be in one of the Maresch Simpson sales, but it was not. Where it is now I have no idea, but it did indicate the existence of a fourth plate made in the time the printers operated in Montreal.

One may think that after such a passage of time my memory is playing tricks, but it seems highly likely that just two plates would be able to produce the bulk of 25 million stamps, particularly remembering that after repair the 'A' plate continued to give satisfactory service in the 2nd Ottawa period. Is there any evidence, other than that fleeting seen block, to support proof that there was indeed a fourth plate in existence in the Montreal period? As with so much of the Small Queens the answer is yes – and no. Single position dots exist in the late Montreal period, which could not come from the 'A' plate because until fairly recently a complete sheet existed, and the 90 positions that

had guide dots – remember the first vertical row had none – had multiple dots, 2 in the second row, and generally three, sometimes four in the other rows.

Figure 5. Ghostly Head 6 cent, Mint.



had guide dots – remember the first vertical row had none – had multiple dots, 2 in the second row, and generally three, sometimes four in the other rows.



Figure 6. Used Strip Of Four, Noting Guide Dots.

That leaves the 1871 plate. *Figure 6* is of a strip of four. Stamps 1, 3 & 4 have two dots, stamp 2 only one. The most likely explanation is that stamp 2 either was never repaired, or that the sidepoint did not bounce and that the strip is from the 1871 plate.

The Six Cents Small Queen Enigma *contd.*

Figure 7 is of a pair, one single dot, the other two dots, perf 11 ½ x 12 therefore definitely from the 1871 plate. Figure 8 is of a cover dated 1878 with a re-entered, note, *re-entered* (doubled base) single dot stamp, perf 12 as are the other cited examples except the pair to left – incidentally, obtained from one of the Maresch Simpson sales. Figures 9 & 9a below are of two single dot varieties. Figure 9a was purchased in a CPS auction on very thin paper and dated again 1878, while the other has its dot in the identical position. Incidentally I hoped the thin paper stamp was on pelure paper which is rare on Small Queens, but on comparing it with the 6c I already had, found it was only the same thin paper used for the 6c Large Queen which somehow had escaped being used in 1868.



Figure 7. Pair From 1871 Plate. Perf 11 ½ X 12, From 1871 Plate.

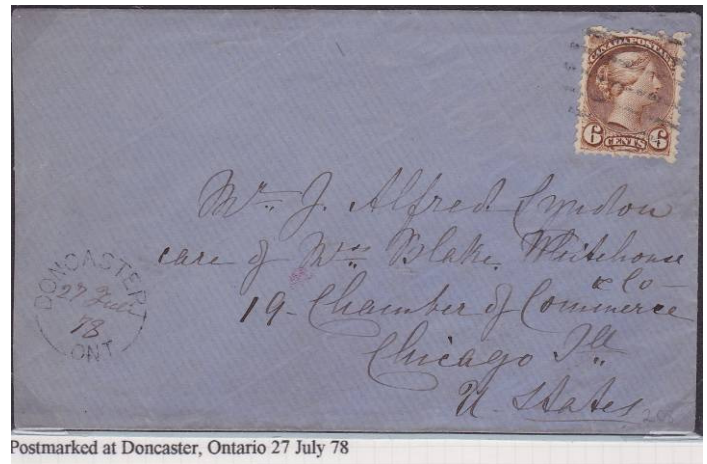


Figure 8. Single on Cover, 1878, Perf 12, Showing Re-Entry. Also a One-Dot State Example.



Figure 9, 9a. Examples of One-Dot State Stamps From Same Plate Position, Different Periods Of Use.



A recent Longley auction had a single dot 6c on piece dated 1882 (Figure 10). The position dot is way to the left which for a guide on its own is unusual. Ideally it would be good to find a late Montreal printing pair, but here are four single dot stamps which seems too many if they all came from unrepaired positions on the 1871 plate. One, on cover, as pointed out has a re-entry. Are any, or all of them from an undiscovered plate, or are we



Figure 10. One-Dot State, Dated 1882 (on Parcel Post piece, cropped from original image)

chasing Chimera? I do not think so. Three plates, averaging 8 million stamps each was not beyond the bounds of possibility. If that is so, then with the 'Montreal' plate made in 1887 but not used until 1890, we have five Six Cents plates.

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Gash in right "1" and Re-entry
Position 88 & 89.



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Shades of the 6¢ Small Queen perf 11½x12

Guillaume Vadeboncoeur (guillaume@vadeboncoeur.ca)

Hillson and Nixon mentioned that “*there is comparatively little difference in the yellow-brown shades over the years that cannot be attributed to the state of the plate used. Perhaps first printings from Ottawa are a little warmer in shade than those from Montreal; there is, however, a distinct, dark, yellow-brown shade noted about August and September 1874*”¹. Based on my conversation with fellow Small Queen collectors, very few people appear to be aware of the existence of this shade.

I recently acquired the cover illustrated below, consisting of a particularly striking example of the distinct dark shade mentioned by Hillson and Nixon. The stamp was used on July 27, 1874, just prior to the August and September 1874 timeframe given by Hillson and Nixon. I personally refer to this distinct dark shade as “black brown”. This specific example is the darkest example I have seen of this short-lived shade. The July use may be an indication that this was from the earliest examples printed in this shade.

As it is difficult to compare or understand colours and shades from the image of a single stamp or cover, I scanned the black-brown stamp along with five mint examples of the 6¢ perf 11½x12 to demonstrate how distinct this shade really is compared to others from the same printing period (c.1873-1876), illustrated below.



- The first stamp is from the “ghostly head” plate in a bright yellow-brown shade characteristic of this printing.
- The second stamp has an unusually pale colour, apparently the result of plate wear, but also has a different hue (duller appearance, less yellow in the ink mix). The wear is consistent with the stamps from the 9th column as illustrated at Figure 14.18 of Hillson and Nixon.
- The third, fourth and fifth stamp represent the “normal” shades encountered for the 11½x12 printings, with the fifth stamp being slightly darker than the norm.

The final stamp is the black brown shade, completely different from the other shades from this printing period. I still have not managed to locate a mint example. The Simpson sales did not offer any. The Hillson and Nixon book did not illustrate this specific shade. I suggest you be on the lookout for mint examples of this stamp, as it is likely quite rare (a decent mint 6¢ 11½x12 is a difficult enough stamp to locate). If you happen to have one, I would encourage you to contact me, especially if you are willing to part with it!

¹ Canada’s Postage Stamp of the Small Queen Era, 1870-1897, p.152

Readers Write

1. Double Sunday Date – Guy Jeffery (guy.jeffery5@gmail.com)



Guy Jeffery sends an image of a Small Queen with not one, but two Sunday cancels. He writes: "Here is a scan of something I think is pretty rare or unusual. This is a "Double Sunday" date. It was mailed from Victoria on 21 Aug 92 and received in San Francisco on 28 August..."

I have been a Small Queen calendar collector for years and finding Sunday dates is very difficult... Perhaps other readers may have similar material. It may have been common for mailgoing to San Francisco from Victoria to have been dispatched on a Sunday and received a week later. I hope others may have something similar. Regards, Guy".

2. April 1 1868 Cancel – Too Good To Be True? – Brian Hargreaves (bhargrea@email.com)

Brian Hargreaves sends images and writes: "I have recently been re-arranging my dated Large Queens into some sort of calendar collection. I acquired the two-cent – illustrated here – some years ago (before I understood the importance of dates). When I recognized it as the first day of issue, I was about to give it pride of place in my display. But examining the cancel more closely, I realized the South Ohio location looked somehow familiar. I have a side collection of cancels on Jubilees, and was reminded of the four other examples from South Ohio, also illustrated".



"Looking at the cancels as a group, they do seem a tad suspicious – all nicely struck, mostly well centred, and of course two of the four are first day of issue! Naturally once my suspicions were aroused and I looked more closely, I am probably right in deducing that the typeface used on the Large Queen is not something in general use at that time."

"I would be interested in members' thoughts. Don't be shy! I am quite prepared to be told all four are bogus! Also I would love to know the source of these cancels if anyone has that information."



3. Two Ring Cancels On Small Queens – Murray Marchant (murraymarchant@hotmail.com)

Murray writes: "Dear Bill: In response to your question about 9, 31 and 39 two-ring cancellations on Small Queens. I have been collecting them for about forty years and have never seen 9 or 39. I do have the three stamps on the attached scan included as number 31. The one on the right is clear but could certainly be a fake as you suggest. The one on the left looks like a 31 but is less clear and what I believe to be a 3 is not quite aligned with the 1".

Readers Write contd.

The cancellation on the centre stamp could be anything but on detailed examination I had ruled out the first digit being a 1, 2, 4 or 5 and concluded it was probably a 3. Not a strong argument for this one”.

“Any comments you or other members could make would be appreciated. I try to get everything I can on cover but unfortunately don’t have one for the elusive Oshawa”. (*editor’s note: Murray provided a picture but I am unable to reproduce it here with clarity, my apologies.*)

4. Eight Cent Small Queen Covers – Jack Forbes

Jack Forbes (jafbrs@aol.com) seeks covers and your offer price for the following months: 1893 (Aug., Sept., Oct., Dec.), 1894 (February, November), 1896 (June), 1898 (August, October, November, December).

Confederation Study Group Meeting at BNAPEX14 – Summary by Bill Radcliffe and Vic Willson

Seven members of the study group met at Baltimore. After a notice by chairman Bill Radcliffe of the issuance of the latest newsletter and a notice of the need for a chairman for the Re-Entry Study Group just formed, the floor was open for discussion of any items attendees might have brought. Vic Willson showed a new listing of a 5 cent cover to Egypt paid with 10 half cent small queens from Quebec May 7, 1895, to Cairo. A London transit of May 17 and Cairo receiver on May 23 document the transit time and routing. Vic later showed a January 29, 1870, 3 cent SQ on cover. Few January covers are recorded.



John Burnett showed unusual uses of Small Queens also, including a printed matter cover to Cyprus and a 5th class cover to the US with US forwarding stamp. He showed a battered but rare cover to the Cape of Good Hope paid with 3 cent and 2x1 cent stamps as well as a double rate registered voter’s list, one of two recorded to date (the other is paid with a 2 cent SQ). Bill Radcliffe then showed a single rate registered voter’s list paid with a single 3 cent stamp. While it might be contrary to regulations, in that period it was unclear how the registration should be paid, since the official guides noted the 2 cent registration stamp was reserved for letters. Bill also showed a 12 cent Cunard rate to France paid with a 10 cent and 2 cent SQs.

A discussion took place about the reason for the perf 12 ½ 3 cent SQ, with a suggestion that it was printed concurrently with the 3rd Bill Stamp when the regular perforator broke, as the Bill stamps were so perforated, and the color matches for the period.

Finally, Bill Radcliffe gave attendees an opportunity to see his two-ring collection and exhibit pages, probably the most extensive grouping ever assembled.

Above: The Cairo 5 cent cover Vic Willson showed at the BNAPEX Confederation Study Group meeting from Quebec May 7, 1895, to Cairo, London May 17 transit and Cairo May 23 receiver (shown here) is one of very few 19th century covers to Egypt. At least one pre-UPU cover exists, paid 20 cents with 10, 6, 3 and 1 cent SQs dated July 31, 1878, and another with date not noted paid with 3 x 6 cent plus 2 cents, around the same time. While there are about 7 of the 1885 Voyageur expedition covers to Egypt to Surgeon Neilson in 1885, there are probably no more than that additional in the 19th century. The fabulous 10 cent single franking to Suez in October 1878 will be auctioned in an upcoming Eastern auction. It sold in 2010 in a Maresch auction for about \$10,000. Post cards are easier to acquire in the 19th century. P4 cards and other 1 cent government cards uprated with SQ, Leaf or Numeral 1 cent number probably no more than 10, likely fewer.

The 15 Cent Large Queen Major Re-entry is (probably) Position 11

Vic Willson (LLOYDWILL@aol.com) and Glenn Archer

The major re-entry on the 15¢ Large Queen has been assigned Position 1 in the literature, the top left stamp of the sheet, based on confirmation of a Position 1 retouch from Fred Fawn’s unique complete sheet. Unfortunately, that is an insufficient basis for the assignment. We will argue the major reentry is NOT Position 1 but Position 11 based on several facts.

First and most important, Position 1 has a guide dot at the top left corner of the stamp. This was apparently placed there when the sheet was laid down as a guide for laying down the design with the transfer roll. This is confirmed by various UL corner blocks that include Position 1. None of the known major re-entries having sufficient UL margin width to see the dot show it. That alone eliminates position 1 as the location. That fact does not preclude Position 1 having a reentry - the reentry occurred early in the life of the plate, as all recorded stamps showing the Major are on the earliest printing shades. Figure 1 is an example of the Major Re-entry with no top left guide dot showing, where it would be were it Position 1.



Figure 1. The Major Re-Entry. Note absence of alignment dot at UL.

Second, the reentries were clearly retouched, as later printings do not show the reentry, but do exhibit evidence of retouches. This is true for both Position 1 and our candidate, Position 11. Position 1 was reentered as seen in Figure 2 in the top at the center and in the PO. The retouch can be seen in a subsequent dark lilac printing, which it appears occurred before Position 11 was retouched, Figure 3. The varieties post-retouch can be confirmed by numerous UL position pieces extant, including the pictured 1890s violet-grey block shown in Figure 4.



Figure 2. Position 1 Re-Entry, note doubling in PO and doubling of oval above OS. There is an alignment dot at UL corner that is absent on the Major Re-Entry.



Figure 3. Position 1 Retouch, early printing. Note the doubling above OS is still present, also the UL alignment dot. Two new constant varieties appeared, a scratch in second A of CANADA and a burr below UL ornaments.

Position 11 was retouched and shows in the same block, supporting Position 11 as the site of the major reentry. No other stamp positions in the sheet exhibit such a retouch in the later printings, and no other early printing shows an alternate candidate.

The Fifteen Cent Major Re-Entry *contd.*

Figure 4 (right). Block of Four from positions 1, 2, 11 and 12 on the sheet. The stamp at Pos. 1 still shows the constant varieties of the stamp in Figure 3. Block is from a violet grey printing, around 1890.

The retouching in Position 1 and 11 is most easily seen in the thickening of the left vignette oval.

Since maybe a dozen major reentries have been found to date, from a practical point of view it does not matter, but from a collecting point of view both Positions 1 and 11 are excellent targets for acquisition, and pairs or blocks containing them are even better.



Chairman's Corner

We had a good meeting in Baltimore at the BNAPS convention on August 30th. Four members and a non-member showed up at the meeting. I expect we will have a larger turnout next year in Niagara Falls.



The cover I'm showing here is what I believe to be the better of the two known fully paid double rate surtax covers to Ceylon. One are known to India. This cover was mailed July 29th, 1879 from South Zorra Ont. And arrived in Kandy, Ceylon Sept. 5th. I would like to know if there are others out there not reported.



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