

Chairman's Message

This issue comes to you on the Canada Day weekend, so I wish everyone a great time with family and friends! It has been a while since our last newsletter, partly due to the fact that both your chairman and editor have been dealing with our parents' health issues. We were also both impacted by Hurricane Ian last fall and had to deal with the damage it caused to our vacation homes.

It is surprising that in the intervening months, I did not receive one email questioning why the Map Stamp Report was delayed for such an extended period of time. Does nobody care? Even with our considerable challenges, the contributions in this issue of the newsletter are primarily from Scott and me. This situation is not sustainable and unless articles and other contributions come from the study group membership, the next newsletter will likely be many months away. This is your newsletter, so please contribute.

I will be attending BNAPEX in Halifax this fall so if anyone has an interest in holding a Map stamp study group meeting, please let me know ASAP so it can be scheduled. Have a great summer!

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My Two Cents – From Your Editor

Firstly, I would like to apologise to all study group members for taking so long to get this latest issue of the Map Stamp Report out to you. As Rick mentioned in his message above, we have both had some serious distractions over the last six months. The good news is that my situation has improved substantially and I have been able to complete this newsletter for you. The bad news is that in the intervening months I have received no new article submissions, shared stamp scans, or other feedback from our members. As Rick has mentioned, if this continues, it will be another long wait before the next newsletter. Please take the time to contribute something or to provide some feedback. If you cannot write an article, try sending us a scan of an interesting Map stamp or cover. We would also welcome feedback on some of the ongoing research mentioned in previous issues. Even a question or plating request is welcomed.

This issue includes three articles by your editors including an overview of an interesting Niagara Falls postcard from Rick, plus some information on using hydrogen peroxide to improve the appearance of “muddy waters” Map stamps and a review of some interesting eBay finds with odd perforations from me.

Finally, our Featured Maps section includes a new discovery on a cover we have shown before and a lovely early date cancel from Jim McCormick.

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Cleaning the Muddy Waters

By Scott Robinson

WARNING: This article discusses treatment of Map stamps with hydrogen peroxide to remove the “muddy waters” discolouration. Like any liquid, hydrogen peroxide can damage mint and used stamps. In addition to its uncertain effects with muddy waters discolouration, it also has the potential to bleach or fade the ink, paper, and cancel of any stamp. Use with caution and avoid exposing valuable or treasured stamps until you have experience with the process. The results discussed and illustrated in the article were achieved strictly with a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution that is commonly used to treat minor cuts and wounds. The author does not accept responsibility for your personal results or any damage that could occur to your stamps.

Introduction: What is Muddy Waters?

Much has been written about the so-called “muddy waters” variety of the Map stamp over the years. It has appeared in some catalogues (notably Darnell) but has generally held more of a fascination with dealers wishing to get a premium price for it than actual collectors. The Unitrade catalogue has never listed “muddy waters” as a variety and has, since the late 1990s, included a note indicating that it is a colour changeling and not a printing variety.

The muddy waters attribute is an interesting chemical reaction that produces a gradual change to the colour of the ocean ink on Map stamps without any noticeable effect on the black or red inks. This change can range from a mild brown cast that darkens the ocean ink to extensive colour changes whereby the entire oceans may appear to have a deep brown, bronze, or golden hue. In extreme cases, the oceans can appear almost black. Typical examples of muddy waters and its early progression from my collection are shown in figure 1. Refer to the previous issue of the Map Stamp Report for some extreme and striking examples contributed by Arnold Janson.



Figure 1: Examples of typical muddy waters Map stamps. Zoom in for a better view.
Included from top left to bottom right are:

- Lavender shade from black plate 1 appearing as light brown muddy waters.*
- Blue shade from black plate 1 showing vertical lines and general spread of muddy waters.*
- Deep blue shade from black plate 2 showing general spread of dark hues muddy waters.*
- Deep blue shade from black plate 2 showing specific area of muddy waters.*
- Lavender shade from black plate 3 showing spread of dark hues muddy waters.*
- Lavender shade from black plate 3 showing spread of orange-brown muddy waters.*
- Major re-entry with blue shade from black plate 5 showing general spread of muddy waters.*
- Blue shade from black plate 5 showing the initial spread of muddy waters from the left side.*

Various philatelic writers have offered theories as to the cause of the muddy waters discolouration, including some rather scientific descriptions of the chemical processes that are likely involved. This topic is beyond the scope of this article but interested readers are invited to review the references listed at the end. A few key points can be summarized here:

- The original printing order for the Map stamps was for half of the stamps to have blue oceans and the other half to have green oceans. Some unintended chemical reactions during production of the stamps are likely why the oceans of the final stamps generally appear as either a faded blue lavender shade (Scott #85) that is sometimes so faded that it is almost invisible, or the various aqua shades (Scott #86) that we generally refer to as blue.
- The muddy waters discolouration is a post-printing chemical reaction likely related to the lead in the ocean inks reacting with airborne hydrogen sulfide. Other conditions such as heat and humidity may also initiate or contribute to this process.
- Exposure to hydrogen peroxide can reverse the appearance of the muddy waters discolouration. This process is not a perfect reversal of the chemical process and may not be identical for the various shades of lavender and blue oceans due to the presence of organic dyes used in preparation of the various inks.

The muddy waters discolouration is a condition that can occur at any time with Map stamps depending on their exposure to certain elements and conditions. The discolouration of the oceans usually starts in one area of the stamp and spreads out as it gets darker over time. The progression of the discolouration may be very slow. Some Map stamps show early signs of muddy waters and their appearance does not change for years.

A good example of the appearance and progression of muddy waters on a Map stamp collection can be seen with Fred Fawn's international gold medal winning exhibit of Map stamps. Versions of that exhibit had travelled the world for twenty years before it was published in the BNAPS Exhibit Series: No. 32 book in June of 2004. I acquired my copy of this excellent book only recently and was quite astounded to see that about 80% of the stamps and proofs shown in the book, including almost all the covers, showed strong signs of muddy waters. Clearly, the collection did not start out that way since the exhibit includes a single page dedicated specifically to muddy waters copies. Fred's exhibit is a good example of how a deep Map collection acquired from many sources can expect to hold up after 20 years of exposure to diverse conditions rather than staying in an album that is only opened occasionally.

Treatment with Hydrogen Peroxide

Like some of Canada's other stamps that are prone to discolouration, treatment with a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution, as found in most pharmacies, can improve and often completely restore a muddy waters Map stamp. Traditionally, this is applied to the front of used or even mint stamps using a soft brush or Q-tip. Obviously great care needs to be taken with mint stamps so that the liquid does not get soaked through the stamp or flow to the edges where it can damage the gum.

Direct application of hydrogen peroxide may be reasonable for Map stamps that are not particularly valuable and have a strong unpleasant muddy waters appearance. For Maps that only have an early or mild muddy waters appearance or that may be cherished copies with higher values, a more restrained application of the hydrogen peroxide is warranted.

My good friend and fellow study group member, Jim McCormick, introduced me to his simple method for fumigating stamps with hydrogen peroxide. He uses a regular household metal strainer to hold the stamps face down above a small bowl of the solution. Using this method, the liquid never contacts the stamps and only the fumes (which are odorless) provide a very mild but steady interaction with the face of the stamps. This simple setup also makes it easy to monitor the progress of the process and to remove any stamps that are deemed to be satisfactorily "fixed".

Figure 2 shows a photograph of the simple strainer setup that I use and the bottle of hydrogen peroxide 3% that I purchased from my local pharmacy for about \$5. I generally put about a centimeter of the liquid in a small glass bowl and place up to 5 Map stamps in the strainer above it. I check the stamps every few hours until I am satisfied with the results or find that no further progress is being made.



Figure 2: My setup for hydrogen peroxide treatment of Map stamps showing the hydrogen peroxide 3% solution that is available from most pharmacies.

I have found that for most Map stamps with relatively mild muddy waters discolouration it takes 6 hours or less of exposure to the hydrogen peroxide solution to return a normal looking stamp. The treatment works best with stamps that have a light discolouration which usually shows as a light brown or orange-beige hue. The improvement is particularly striking with stamps that have lavender oceans that have gone brown. The basic treatment does not work as well with stamps that have very dark grey or black muddy waters discolouration. The key aspect of the treatment is to balance the chemical colour change with the bleaching or whitening effect that can occasionally occur if the stamps are exposed to the solution for too long.

Generally, I find that the black and red ink does not change even after prolonged exposure to the hydrogen peroxide. The discoloured ocean inks show a dramatic change that is clearly related to a chemical process and not just from bleaching or lightening of the ink. The only unintended change that can occasionally show up is a slight bleaching or whitening of the paper. I have found this mostly occurs as a slight whitening of the yellowed paper on used copies with lavender oceans. I suspect that this occurs because the yellowed paper is associated with the spreading of lavender ocean ink when used stamps have been soaked. Although not the topic of this article, I note here that I believe the main reason that so many lavender ocean Map stamps actually have very little ocean colour is because the lavender ink is somewhat soluble in water and more prone to fading from prolonged exposure to light. I have found that the difference between the colour of typical mint and used lavender ocean stamps is quite pronounced, whereas the blue shades do not generally show significant differences between mint and used copies.

Although the occasional mild whitening of the paper from prolonged exposure to hydrogen peroxide does make the stamps look better, the purist in me believes that it is something to be avoided. This is one of the reasons why I like this fumigation process for applying the hydrogen peroxide. It rarely makes any noticeable change to the paper, and this can almost always be mitigated by regularly checking on the progress of the treatment.

Some Sample Results

The first example I will share is a couple of Maps showing typical light brown or beige muddy waters oceans (top row of figure 3). The left stamp was printed from black plate 1 and the right stamp from plate 3. Since there is no sign of blue ink and the muddy waters discolouration is a reasonably light hue, it stands to reason that these Maps previously had lavender oceans. After treating them for about six hours, the result was that the ocean ink discolouration was virtually eliminated, and the original lavender hue was restored (bottom row of figure 3). Notice that the red and black ink, the postmarks, and the paper show essentially no change.



Figure 3: Example showing two used Map stamps at top before treatment and the same stamps at bottom after six hours of fumigation with 3% hydrogen peroxide solution.

In order to show some examples for this article printed from other black plates and with different ocean colours, I scoured eBay for some inexpensive yet badly discoloured examples. I was very pleased to find the stamps shown at the top of figure 4. The first stamp would originally have been a lavender example from plate 2. The second would originally have been a deep blue example from plate 2, and the third a typical blue/green shade from black plate 5. Notice that all three untreated stamps from the first row show very strong muddy waters discolouration (almost a dark grey brown hue) at the top of the map but a much lighter and more varied discolouration near the bottom of the map.

The second row in figure 4 shows the same stamps after 6 hours of treatment. Notice that the blue ocean stamps on the right are already beginning to show their true colours. Much of the muddy waters has been eliminated but the colour of

the oceans is still off at the bottom and there are still remnants of the stronger muddy waters near the top. The first stamp on the left shows some lightening of the muddy waters but no sign of the stamp's original ocean colour.

The third row in figure 4 shows the same stamps after another 6 hours of treatment with a fresh hydrogen peroxide solution. Notice how the shades of the two blue ocean stamps look normal and there is no longer any evidence of muddy waters even at the top of the stamps. The first stamp on the left has much lighter muddy waters but no sign of its original ocean colour.

Since I was not having much luck with the first stamp after 12 hours of fumigation, I decided to soak it directly in the hydrogen peroxide solution overnight. The result is shown as the bottom stamp in figure 4. Notice that, even after this more extreme treatment, the stamp still shows obvious signs of muddy waters and only the slightest hint of its original lavender oceans. It should also be noted that the stamp shows no significant indications of bleaching or lightening of the other inks, the postmark, or the paper.



Figure 4: Illustrating the progression of three stamps treated with hydrogen peroxide. The first row is the original stamps with strong muddy waters. The second row shows the same stamps after 6 hours of fumigation. The third row shows the stamps after 12 hours of fumigation. The single stamp in the fourth row shows the stamp after it has also been soaked overnight in hydrogen peroxide solution.

Final Observations

It is my hope that this article has inspired some of you to try the suggested hydrogen peroxide fumigation method for removing muddy waters discolouration of Map stamps. As suggested by the examples presented here, this method is reasonably safe and generally has good results. Most muddy waters Map stamps can be returned to their original ocean colours without adversely affecting other areas of the stamp. Although specific examples of Map stamps with only a slight muddy waters cast to the ocean colour were not presented here, I can confirm that the fumigation treatment works particularly well with these stamps and usually removes any evidence of this mild form of discolouration.

For more extreme muddy waters examples, the results are usually still good but not always perfect. The long-term results of this treatment are still largely unknown. I presume that exposure to the same conditions that originally caused the muddy waters discolouration would cause it to return. Also, although I have never heard any reports of this, it is possible that exposure to hydrogen peroxide could have other unintended long-term effects on the ink or paper of the stamps.

To me, the biggest risk with this treatment is the potential for a stamp to be bleached or lightened unintentionally. I have not experienced this problem to any significant degree. However, I have only treated a few dozen Map stamps, so my results might not match your own. It is strongly suggested that you experiment with this process on stamps that are easily replaced before trying it with your most treasured Map stamps.

It should be clear that I am not a fan of muddy waters Map stamps and certainly do not believe that dealers should charge a premium for them. They are clearly colour changelings that can be created and reversed using chemical processes. However, it is not my place to tell collectors what they should collect. Some of the extreme colour changes can make very attractive album pages and exhibits. My only argument against these types of collectible Map stamps is that there is no way to know what their long-term status will be. A stamp with lovely golden oceans today, may become an ugly brown mess tomorrow.

References

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A Map Stamp Franked Private Post Card with the 5B91 Major Re-entry

By Rick Friesen

Pictured below is an interesting post card from several respects. First, it is a very pretty USA private mailing card that was posted in Canada (Niagara Falls duplex cancel dated AM/JU 22/99). Someone obviously purchased the card in the USA, crossed the border to view Niagara Falls from the Canadian side and then sent the card. Second, it is addressed to Germany so the UPU post card rate from Canada would apply, which was 2¢ in June of 1899. Therefore, the franking overpaid the UPU rate by 1¢, a rare rate and usage of the Map stamp. Finally, the Map stamp is from plate position 5B91 (see closeup on next page), probably the most famous re-entry on the Map issue. A neat item!



Figure 1: Front and back views of USA private mailing card posted from Niagara Falls, Canada.



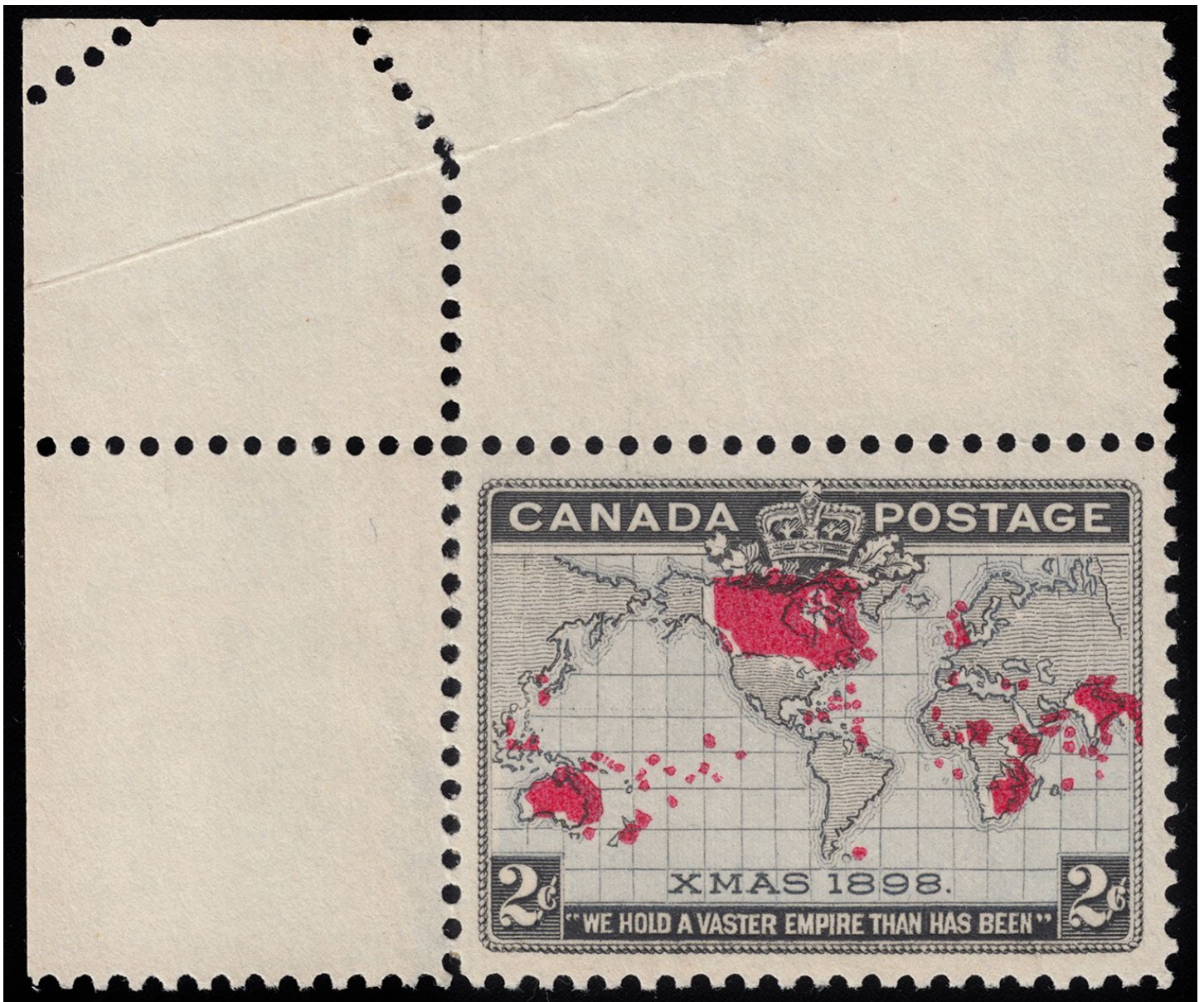
Figure 2: Closeup view of Map stamp from 5B91 showing the major re-entry and retouched bottom cable.

Some eBay Perforation Madness

By Scott Robinson

Over the last year, I have had occasion to pick up a few Map items with interesting perforations on eBay. While I am not normally a collector of perforation oddities, as a Map specialist, I think it is nice to be able to show some of these in my Map collection. After sharing my finds with some collector friends via email, Earl Noss replied with one of his own eBay perforation finds. These unusual Map items are presented below.

First up is an interesting perforation error from the upper left corner of a sheet printed from black plate 1. The stamp (1A1) features the full corner selvedge with some unusual perforations caused by a small fold-over of the paper when the sheet was perforated. The crease that remains from the fold-over is also clearly visible in the upper selvedge. To understand how this occurred, you simply have to imagine the corner of the selvedge folded down over the crease. In this folded state, the perforations would have been applied as normal. It is only when the paper is later unfolded that the extra perforations and their strange orientation become apparent. This is a simple production freak, but an attractive one.



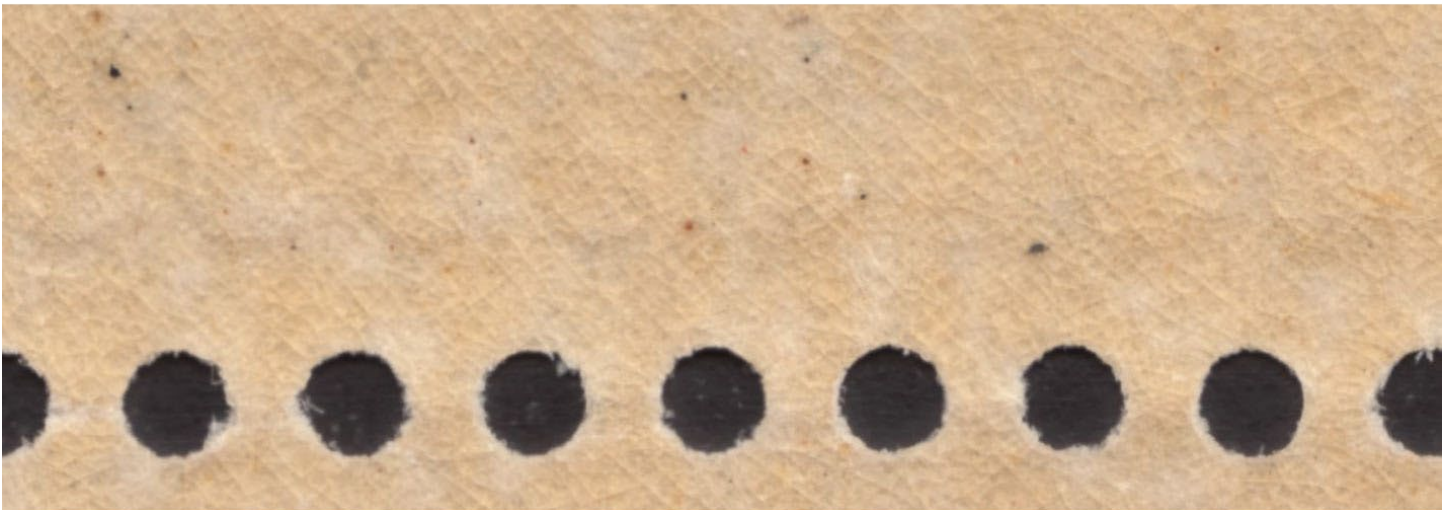
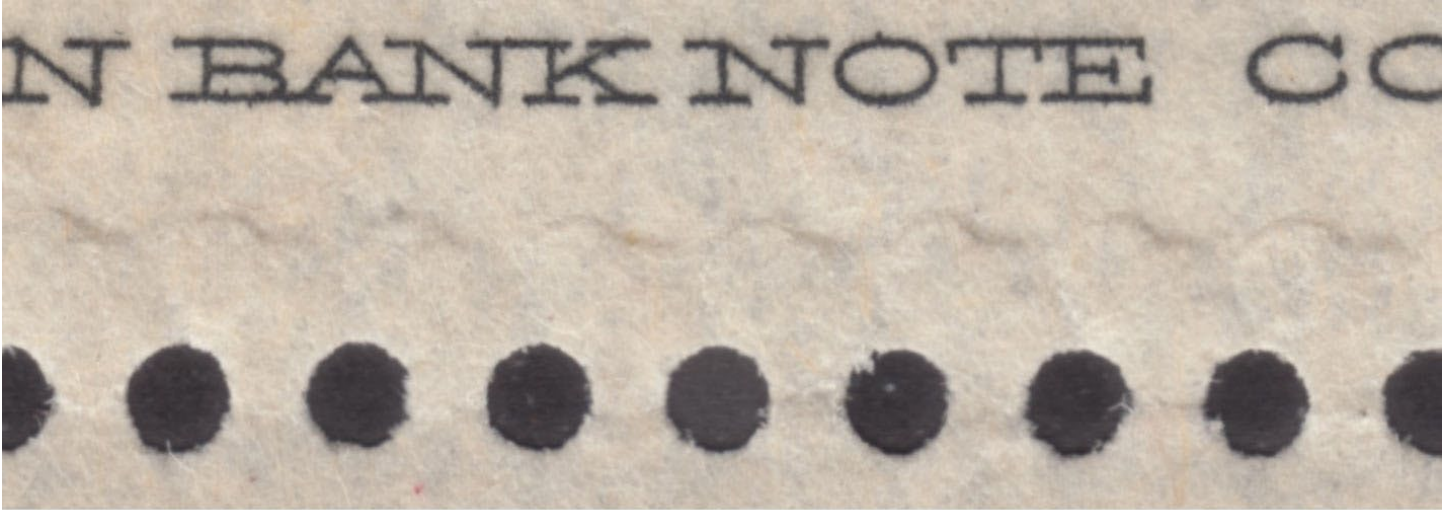
Next up are a couple of pairs from the bottom of the sheet that show an extra row of perforations in the bottom selvedge. The first pair (3A83-3A93) features lavender oceans from black plate 3. The bottom selvedge includes the imprint and a large black ink dot that is commonly found in the bottom selvedge on Map sheets. The second pair (5B90-5B100) features blue oceans from black plate 5. It has some staining in the selvedge and a hollow black dot. The interesting aspect to these pairs is that they both feature the same type of spacing for the extra row of perforations at the bottom. On both pairs, the extra row of perforations is placed well down into the selvedge but not so low that it would allow for the height of an extra row of stamps. This does not appear to be a simple perforation error whereby an extra normally spaced row of perforations was applied to the sheet. Although the pairs come from different black plates, they both feature the same oddly placed extra perforations and also a normal guillotine cut below. I have noticed a third example of this on eBay without specifically looking for it, so it cannot be particularly rare. On the other hand, the vast majority of Map stamps showing the bottom selvedge have no sign of these extra perforations. An explanation for them is elusive.



Our last example of an eBay perforation oddity was sent to me by Earl Noss after I had shared my examples with him. Earl has noticed several lots on eBay showing Maps with “phantom” perforations. The nice imprint example (2A8) displayed below is from black plate 2 and shows a very clear extra set of phantom horizontal perforations in the upper selvedge between the imprint and the regular perforations. These phantom perforations are only indentations in the paper with no actual perforation holes present. They have the appearance of being rolled in by the perforating machine without sufficient force to make the expected holes. Earl’s copy also shows much lighter phantom perforations at the bottom of the stamp and on the right side. Even the gum side of the stamp shows some evidence of these phantom perforations.



The closeup view below shows what the middle phantom perforations from the top selvedge look like from the front and back of Earl's stamp. I have occasionally seen similar phantom perforations on other Canadian stamps. Of note, certain values of the Nova Scotia Victoria issue from the 1860s frequently exhibit these phantom perforations. These are rarely discussed, and I have never read anything about how they may have been caused.



Featured Maps

This issue's first featured Map comes from my good friend and fellow study group member, Jim McCormick. He has a fine collection of Maps with early dated cancels but did not have what many consider to be the first date of issue, December 7, 1898. So he was very pleased to acquire the Map stamp on dated piece shown below for less than \$100 on eBay. The stamp is tied to the piece by a partial Toronto flag cancel with a very clear DEC 7 1898 date.

The stamp, itself, is an attractive copy from the first black plate (1A55) with nice centering and large margins so that it still clearly shows the horizontal line from the centre cross at the right of the top margin. The stamp also supports the early date because it shows the correct lavender ocean shade and also a faint black vertical guide line west of Australia and near the top of the stamp. I believe these vertical guide lines appeared at almost all positions of the original state of plate 1. As more stamps were printed, the guide lines wore away until they disappeared from most plate positions. Jim's copy shows this guide line as would be expected from a very early printing. I have two copies from this plate position with blue oceans that show no sign of the guide line.



Figure 1: Map stamp from 1A55 on piece dated DEC 7 1898. The closeup view at right highlights a vertical guide line that is present for many positions of plate 1 on the original plate. These later wore away for many positions as the plate was used in production.

Our second featured Map is a lovely cover that was shared by Rick Friesen in our study group Zoom meeting at BNAPEX VIRTUAL 2021 when he presented barred circle postmarks on Map stamp covers. The cover was also featured in the November 2021 Map Stamp Report as the only documented usage of the St. John's, Newfoundland barred circle postmark on a Map cover. It appears on the reverse side of the cover as a receiving postmark. I noted at that time that the front of the cover was also outstanding because it featured four Map stamps from three different plates and including all four of the generally accepted major ocean shades.

The cover is featured here once again because Rick emailed me with the news that it also includes two of the constant ocean plate varieties that I had discussed in the last issue of the Map Stamp Report. The cover is shown on the next page with some closeups of the ocean plate varieties. The first stamp (2A75) with lavender oceans exhibits a smudgy area of missing ocean ink above the left value tablet. This is very hard to reproduce using a JPG scan published in a PDF file. Although very subtle, Rick assures me it shows better with the naked eye. The second stamp (2A35) with deep blue oceans clearly exhibits the "Tsunami" variety. It shows a strong irregular line of missing ocean ink that descends from Alaska down the coast of Canada to Vancouver Island. These newly observed features make an already great cover exceptional!



Figure 2: Exceptional cover featuring four Map stamps in four ocean shades from three black plates. The reverse side (not shown) is notable for a rare St. John's, Newfoundland barred circle postmark.



Figure 3: Closeup view of the first two stamps from the cover highlighting constant ocean plate varieties including a faint smudge of missing ink above the left value tablet (2A75) and a strong irregular line of missing ink along the west coast of Canada (2A35).

BNAPS Xmas 1898 Map Stamp Study Group

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This newsletter and previous issues are available as PDF files from the BNAPS website. Submissions for and feedback about the newsletter should be sent to the Editor, Scott Robinson.

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