

Chairman's Message

First of all, Merry Christmas to all of the members of the study group. I hope that you have had a great year adding to your Map stamp collections. A perusal of many of the auctions that have taken place this year suggest that interest in the Map stamp is alive and well. For example, in the Garden City auction in September, one of the Map stamp lots offered was an "Imperforate Centre Cross Block, an unused (no gum, as issued) block of four with the short (9 x 9 mm) cross in centre, from position 45-46 / 55-56 of the sheet" that sold for the estimated value of \$4,000 plus buyer premium. Similar high prices have been paid for rare canceled Map stamps. But deals can still be had for both mint and used examples and that is what makes collecting this issue so much fun!

I hope that you enjoy this last issue of the year and please consider writing a short (or long!) article on your collecting interest. Without your contributions, we will continue to have only a few issues per year since Scott and I can only contribute so much. Happy Holidays!

Rick Friesen, Chairman
Stittsville, Ontario
rickfriesen5@gmail.com

Contents

Chairman's Message	1
My Two Cents – From Your Editor	1
Plating a Challenging Map Stamp with Variable Red Plate Characteristics By Scott Robinson	2
Bisected Map Stamps on Cover By Rick Friesen	6
Map Stamp Pillow – A Great Xmas Gift for Map Collectors By Scott Robinson	10
Map Finds and Curiosities	12

My Two Cents – From Your Editor

Welcome to the second and final newsletter for 2025. I have been working on a detailed article about plate 5 Map stamps for many months now and it has been holding up this issue. I finally decided to leave my plate 5 article for next year (if I can ever finish researching it) and get something out before the holidays. We have quite a varied array of articles and features in this issue including a cover shared by Arnie Janson, an unplated stamp shared by Neil Somerset, a Christmas card shared by Chairman Rick, and an old-time article as shared by Grégoire Teyssier.

I turned the unplated stamp as shared by Neil into an excruciatingly complicated plating exercise in our first article. Rick has provided an excellent article or mini census concerning bisected Map stamps. Finally, I report on an unusual handmade Map stamp pillow and recommend it as a gift for any Map stamp enthusiast.

I share Rick's sentiment in wishing all our readers a happy holiday season and all the best for the new year!

Scott Robinson, Report Editor
Pierrefonds, Quebec
scott@flyspecker.com

Plating a Challenging Map Stamp with Variable Red Plate Characteristics

By Scott Robinson

Recently, study group member Neil Somerset shared with me a scan of a Map stamp that he had been trying to plate. He had already received some email opinions and observations from fellow members, Simon Taylor-Young and Vince Chermishnok, but they were not able to come to a consensus for the plate/position. The stamp is shown below.

Editor's Note: For those who are interested in plating Map stamps, I suggest you give this one a try before reading on. It is a very challenging example.



On first looking at the stamp scan, I did not notice any characteristics that gave me any immediate indication as to the plates or positions. I generally start a plating effort by trying to determine if the stamp comes from black plate 5 (and therefore red plate B) or black plates 1, 2 or 3 (and almost certainly red plate A). This stamp showed island 3 in the Pacific Island Group (PIG) as being split into several smaller islands. I usually associate this with red plate B (and black plate 5) since there are at least 15 positions on that plate with this characteristic. I also noted that the black plate characteristics of Neil's stamp included a strong position dot in the Tonkin Gulf plus an additional small dot in the right margin next to India. These characteristics are uncommon for plate 5, so I thought it would be easy to search through my plating reference books and my own stamps to quickly find a black plate 5 position that matched these black and red plate characteristics.

As I examined each plate 5 position in ascending order, my optimism started to wane as I realised I was running out of positions. Sure enough, I completed my examination of all one hundred black 5 positions without finding a satisfactory match. The fact that I had wasted considerable effort by starting with this plate became all the more apparent when it was noted by Simon Taylor-Young that the cancel on the stamp appeared to be dated JAN 4, 99. This is significant because Map stamps printed from plate 5 are not known (or at least exceedingly rare) with dates earlier than February 1899. The light blue ocean colour of Neil's stamp is also not a good indication of a plate 5, but working from a scan instead of an actual stamp makes ocean colours a little ambiguous.

My next step was to review all the positions of red plate A that are common to the printings from black plates 1, 2, and 3. Actually, I could remove plate 3 from the equation because that plate is only printed with lavender oceans and even the scan makes it clear that Neil's stamp is not lavender. I needed to find another red plate characteristic because most stamps from black plates 1 and 2 have Tonkin dots and I was not sure that the small additional dot in the right margin would be noted in my references. The other obvious non-standard red plate characteristic on this stamp was a distinct extra island just east of Australia. I used my Ken Kershaw reference (*Plating the Canadian Xmas Map Stamp of 1898. Vol. II*) to review each plate position looking for a similar Tonkin dot, extra island next to Australia, multiple dots for PIG island 3, and possibly the dot in the right margin. Once again, I started at plate position one and reviewed each position in order. And once again, I was starting to feel very pessimistic until I found that position 99 from black plate 1 had a matching Tonkin dot, similar island east of Australia, and two small dots in the right margin. So 1A99 looked like a good candidate until I examined it more closely. The problems that showed in the Kershaw images regarding the red plate included PIG island 3 being a solid single island, the general shapes of many of the red territories not matching very well, and the fact that both 1A99 and Neil's stamp had additional very small red dots that also just did not match. Finally, there was also the annoying fact that there were two black dots in the right margin instead of one.

Feeling all hope was lost, I took a look at the last position in my Kershaw reference, position 100. To my surprise, black plate 1 was a good fit, having an identical Tonkin dot and single dot in the right margin. The problem was that the red plates did not initially appear to match the Kershaw images very well. A closer look revealed that although there were some significant differences, the general shape and placement of the red territories (particularly the islands of the Indian Ocean Group) matched very well. The remaining problem was that there were a couple of prominent extra red islands shown in the Kershaw images that were not on the stamp, and the extra island east of Australia on the stamp did not show at all in the Kershaw images.

I checked my Whitney Bradley reference (*The Canadian Map Stamp of 1898 – A Plating Study*) for any additional information on this position of red plate A. Although Bradley mentions some extra dots in PIG, his description generally agrees with Kershaw. He does mention some additional black plate criteria including a “reinforced lower cable” and a “horizontal guide line” in the bottom margin. The centering of Neil's stamp makes examination of these characteristics difficult. I could see no evidence of any guide line and only the slightest suggestion of some extra ink in the bottom cable.

To get some clarity on these apparent differences regarding this position of red plate A, my last step was to review my own copies and reference scans. Here is where it gets very interesting. Based on my own identified copies, I noticed that black plates 2 and 3 show the red plate characteristics much as Kershaw and Bradley describe them. For black plate 1, about half of my copies also follow these characteristics. However, the other half look much like Neil's copy. I also currently have loaned access to the Map collection of Dr. James Watt that includes many copies cherry-picked from Ken Kershaw's own collection. Again, these plate 1 copies are split between the different red plate characteristics. I am not sure if Kershaw just did not notice these differences or if he only acquired various copies after he had already published his book.

It appears that 1A100 is another position where the red plate evolves considerably from early plate 1 printings to later printings from this plate and the other plates. These types of changes to the red plate are not unknown. Many positions of red plate A show small changes between the different black plate printings. Kershaw mentions several positions where black plate 3 stamps show minor differences to the red plate. Red plate A position 31 shows drastic changes between the early and later printings among the different plates. Note that these changes are not always clear cut. It is more like a spectrum of changes where the different characteristics of the red plate fade in and out over multiple printings.

The differences for position 100 of red plate A are summarized in the image below from mint copies in my collection. The top stamp is an example of how the red plate would typically appear for all three black plates. The lower stamp is very similar to Neil's stamp and shows how the red plate would appear only on certain plate 1 printings.



Please zoom in and refer to the highlighted stamps shown on the previous page to appreciate the details discussed below. The characteristics highlighted in blue show various red marks and extra islands mentioned in Kershaw and Bradley. From left to right, notice how the top stamp shows a strong projection and/or dot east of PIG island 9, a projection or dot west of PIG island 7, an extra island between PIG island 2 and 4, a strong dot or projection north of Bermuda, plus several red marks below a very horizontal Cyprus. In the bottom stamp, these features are either less prominent or even completely missing.

The yellow highlights show the two main characteristics of the bottom stamp (and Neil's stamp) that differ significantly from the Kershaw/Bradley descriptions and that make plating difficult. There is a prominent island east of Australia and PIG island 3 is divided into multiple smaller islands. In the top stamp there is only a small projection from Australia and PIG island 3 is a single island.

The green highlights show four different small red marks that are not mentioned by Kershaw/Bradley but that are present to some degree on all copies and useful for plating this stamp.

Both stamps show the same black plate 1 characteristics for this position including the prominent Tonkin dot, the dot in the right margin near India, another position dot at the bottom right corner margin, and even some evidence of the very faint horizontal line in the bottom margin as mentioned by Bradley.

In closing, I feel very confident in plating Neil's stamp to an early printing of 1A100 before some changes evolved on the red plate that are normally present from copies of this position. Since I started this plating journey on black plate 5 and then went through the other plates beginning from the first position, I was forced to review all 400 plate/positions before finding a match for this position 100 stamp. Indeed, a challenge!

Bisected Map Stamps on Cover

By Rick Friesen

Bisected stamps (stamps cut in half vertically, horizontally or diagonally), usually cut to make stamps of values that the postmaster did not have on hand, have never been authorized for use in Canada. Indeed, the *1898 Canada Official Postal Guide* (Government Printing Bureau, Ottawa, pg iv (1898)) states that “No mutilated stamp can be accepted in payment of postage...”. However, covers with bisected Map stamps, although uncommon, were apparently accepted by the postmaster and passed through the mails without penalty.

I recently acquired the cover in Figure 1 in which the left half of a vertically bisected Map stamp (plate/position 1A95) is canceled with a circular grid on a cover posted in Niagara Falls South, ONT (CDS dispatch dated PM/FE 25/03). The 1¢ postage paid the drop letter rate without carrier service. Niagara Falls South (formerly called Drummondville) was not a substation of Niagara Falls, but was a separate village until mid-1903, situated 0.8 km west of the Falls and connected to Niagara Falls by horse-drawn street railway.

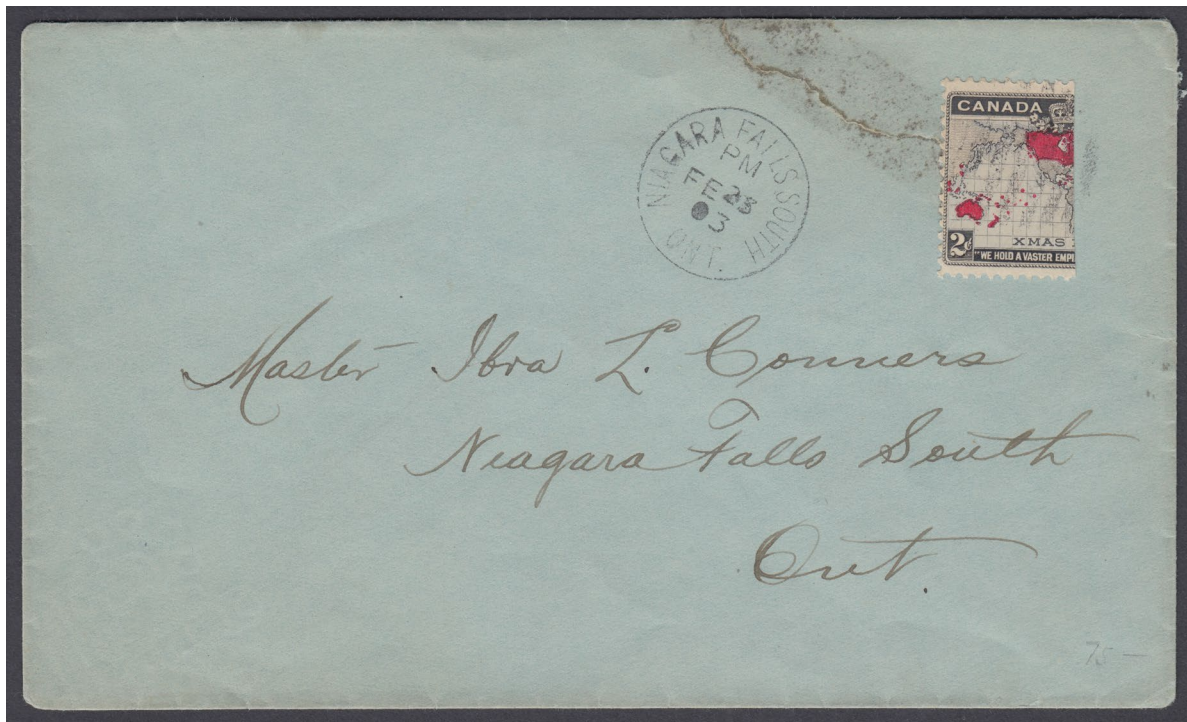


Figure 1: Niagara Falls South drop letter cover with a bisected Map stamp

I have documented six additional bisected Map stamp covers from auction catalogues and the philatelic literature and they are listed by date in the table below. All seven covers can be viewed as “correct commercial usage” since they were apparently accepted by the post office, passing through the mails without penalty. From the tabulated covers, only the cover from Mount Forest paid the proper 1¢ drop letter rate for towns without carrier service. Both of the covers from Montreal contained only printed matter (note that the description of the “flap having been folded in” is consistent with a cover containing printed matter on FEB 21/99) and therefore the correct postage of 1¢ was paid. However, it appears that the two drop letter covers from Toronto were underpaid by 1¢ since carrier service was available in Toronto and therefore a 2¢ rate should have been applied.

Table: Bisected Map Stamps on Cover

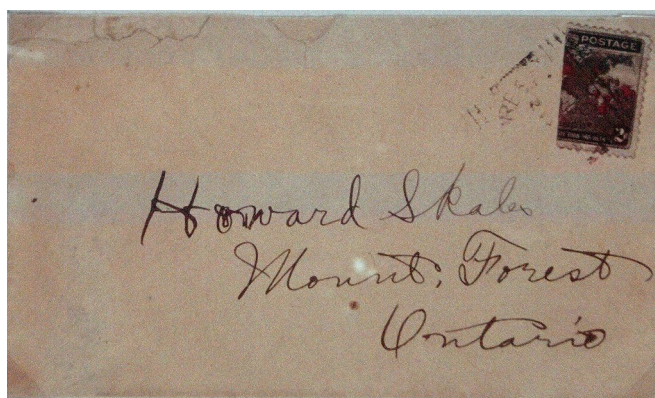
Cancel: MOUNT•FOREST/ONT Squared Circle dated ? 12/??

Franking: Right half of a vertically bisected 2¢ Map

Destination: Mount Forest, ONT (drop letter rate without carrier service)

References:

1. *BNA Topics*, Vol 13, #7, Whole #137, pg 175 (1956)
2. *Roundup Annex*, Vol 13, #2, Whole #57, pg 405/408 (1990): In that same letter to the Editor (see ref (1)), a photograph is provided of a bisect of the 2c MAP STAMP tied by MOUNT FOREST/ONT. type 1 squared circle addressed locally, hence the rate would be correct....It was also pictured on the front cover of the same issue of Topics.
3. Ron Leith auctions February 1997 public auction #19, Lot #1122: MAP BISECT, black-brown ocean shade variety of #85, rare un-official bisect pays the 1¢ drop letter rate at MOUNT-FOREST/ONT, allowed by the Postmaster and tied by a MOUNT-FOREST type-1 sq. circle, likely used when the supply of 1¢ stamps was depleted, this cover was written up in the July-August 1956 issue of BNA Topics, rough opening at top, a rare cover and VG-F
4. *Map Stamp Study Group Newsletter*, Vol 3, #1, Whole #8, pg 64 (2002): Unofficial vertical bisect. One cent drop letter rate tied by Mt. Forest ON Type 1 square circle.
5. *Map Stamp Study Group Newsletter*, Vol 5, #2, Whole #16, pg 142 (2004): Vertical bisect tied by Mr. Forest Type 1 square circle cancel - date is unreadable.
6. John T. Anders Imperial Penny Postage 1898 – John T. Anders, *Imperial Penny Postage 1898 – ORAPEX 2002 Exhibit*: (written-up page displaying the cover) Bisecting of stamps, although not officially sanctioned, was allowed in the Maritimes, especially Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Stamps were usually cut in half to create values that the Postmaster did not have on hand. Full covers are required for proof of genuineness. (Image)



Cancel: UPPER•STEWIAKE/N.S CDS dated FE 18/99

Franking: Right half of a vertically bisected 2¢ Map, 1¢ Postal Stationery (U9)

Destination: Middle Stewiacke, N.S. (domestic letter rate)

References:

1. Fred Fawn, *Imperial Penny Postage of 1898*, BNAPS Exhibit Series No. 32, pg 74 (2004) (Image)
2. Spink Shreves Galleries November 2007 auction #96 of the Fred Fawn collection, Lot #1523: 1898 2c Black, deep blue and carmine Imperial Penny Postage, horizontal bisect used as 1c on a 1c Green postal entire (Unitrade #U9) to make the 2c letter rate, tied by "Upper Stewiacke/N.S./FE 18 99" c.d.s., minor edge tear to cover at top, very fine; while not officially recognized, with the reduction of the letter rate from 3c to 2c several Nova Scotia post offices resorted to this provisional measure



Cancel: MONTREAL Flag dated FEB 21/10-O/1899

Franking: Upper half of a diagonally bisected 2¢ Map

Destination: Montreal, QUE (printed matter rate)

References:

1. BNA Topics, Vol. 9, No. 8, pg 213 (1952): "The actual cover apparently passed through the mails as a 1¢ rate item, the flap having been folded in."
2. John T. Anders, "Map Stamp Bisects", *The 1898 Christmas Map Stamp Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Whole #16, pg 142 (2004)
3. Sparks Auctions September 2018 auction #28 of the Rob Lunn collection, Lot #355: 2c Map Bisected to Pay the 1c Drop Letter Rate, mailed Montreal on FEB.21.1899 this cover was mailed using a diagonally bisected Map stamp (upper half) to pay the 1c drop letter rate. The stamp is properly tied by a Montreal Bickerdike flag machine cancel. We are aware of only two other bisects of the Map stamp, one bisected vertically from Upper Stewiacke NS on FEB.18.1899 (ex. Fawn) and another bisected diagonally (possibly the lower half of this stamp?) mailed in Montreal on FEB.25.1899 to a different address but also cancelled with the same Bickerdike machine (also ex. Fawn).



Cancel: MONTREAL Flag dated FEB 25/24-O/1899

Franking: Bottom half of a diagonally bisected 2¢ Map

Destination: Montreal, QUE (printed matter rate)

References:

1. Fred Fawn, *Imperial Penny Postage of 1898*, BNAPS Exhibit Series No. 32, pg 74 (2004) (Image)
2. Spink Shreves Galleries November 2007 auction #96 of the Fred Fawn collection, Lot #1523: 1898 2c Black, blue and carmine Imperial Penny Postage, diagonal bisect used as 1c to pay the unsealed printer matter rate, tied by "Montreal/FE 25 1899" flag machine cancel, very fine and attractive; bisects from Montreal are rare, this being one of only two recorded examples



Cancel: TORONTO 'D' Flag dated DEC 20/22-O/1899

Franking: Bottom half of a diagonally bisected 2¢ Map

Destination: Toronto, ONT (drop letter rate without carrier service?)

Notes: It appears that the postage was underpaid by 1¢ since the drop letter rate with carrier service, which was available in Toronto, was 2¢.

References:

1. John T. Anders Imperial Penny Postage 1898 – John T. Anders, *Imperial Penny Postage 1898 – ORAPEX 2002 Exhibit*
2. John T. Anders, "Bisect Map Covers", *The 1898 Christmas Map Stamp Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Whole #8, pg 64 (2002) (Image)
3. John T. Anders, "Map Stamp Bisects", *The 1898 Christmas Map Stamp Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Whole #16, pg 142 (2004)



Cancel: TORONTO, CANADA machine cancel dated NOV 17/10_AM/1902

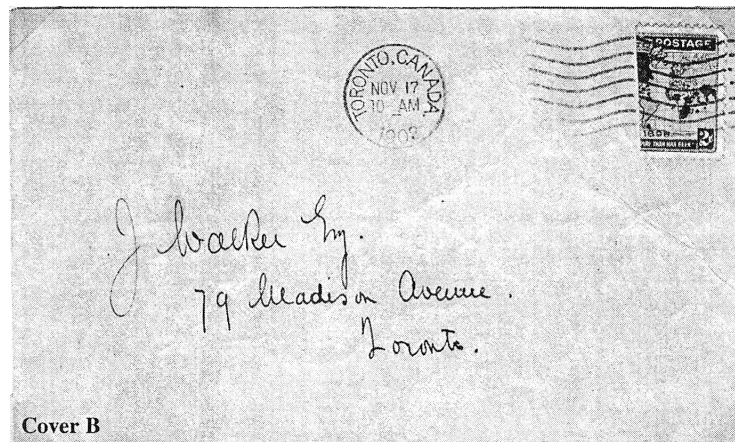
Franking: Right half of a vertically bisected 2¢ Map

Destination: Toronto, ONT (drop letter rate without carrier service?)

Notes: It appears that the postage was underpaid by 1¢ since the drop letter rate with carrier service, which was available in Toronto, was 2¢.

Reference:

1. John T. Anders, "Map Stamp Bisects", *The 1898 Christmas Map Stamp Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Whole #16, pg 142 (2004)



An additional Map bisect cover which was posted in 1939 is clearly philatelic and is not included in this list (see John T. Anders, "Map Stamp Bisects", in *The 1898 Christmas Map Stamp Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Whole #16, pg 142 (2004)). R.B. Winmill in his book, *The Evolution of Imperial Penny Postage and the Postal History of the Canadian 1898 Map Stamp* (Hennok, Toronto, pg 90 (1982)), suggests that Map stamp bisects originating in St. John, Halifax and St. Catharines also exist. However, to my knowledge these items and three covers from October 1899 referenced in the *Mount Royal Stamp News* (see story on the last page of this newsletter) have not been documented in any modern auction or philatelic literature. If any study group member has additional information regarding these covers, please get in touch!

Map Stamp Pillow – A Great Xmas Gift for Map Collectors

By Scott Robinson

Rick Friesen recently shared a link with me of an interesting video on the *NTSC Presents* YouTube channel as managed by the North Toronto Stamp Club. The video (available from <https://youtu.be/MRtWGJQU-yM?si=qOT5zsmsbQLMb3Sb>) features a lively presentation by collector and Canadian radio broadcaster, Chris Robinson, on the British Empire territories or “red blobs” highlighted on the Map stamp. The presentation attempts to identify each territory and provides a guided tour featuring other maps on stamps and his own travel experience. Positively identifying all the red territories on Map stamps is nearly impossible, but Robinson gives it a good try while providing some amusing anecdotes and insights.

What caught my eye on first viewing the video was an attractive pillow shown at the beginning of the presentation that featured a Map stamp. A little Google research revealed that this is a throw cushion type of pillow made by the Vintage Map Co., a small Ontario company owned and operated by Helen Hawketts, who personally makes all the pillows by hand.

The “Vintage Canada Stamp Pillow” is described on the company website (<https://vintagemapco.com>) as “a 100% linen-cotton canvas pillow, down filled with a 12x18 inch insert (made in Canada). Finished pillow measures approximately 11 by 17 inches. The backing fabric is a black linen-cotton blend.” The website sells the pillows for \$69.99 with free worldwide shipping.

The pillow, as shown in the photo below, features an accurate reproduction of the Map stamp complete with well-centred red territories, nice deep blue oceans, and even some evidence of “muddy waters” discolouration in the bottom half of the stamp. Looking at the image, I wondered to myself if it would be possible to plate the stamp shown on the pillow.



Figure 1: Map Stamp Pillow as sold by the Vintage Map Co.

The red plate characteristics are shown pretty well in the photo and these clearly include a nice protrusion at the bottom of Pig island 9, a strong projection from Canada in the area of the Great Lakes, plus the very distinctive Northern position of Malta such that it appears much higher than Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. These characteristics clearly indicate position 7 from red plate A. Since the Tonkin Gulf area of the stamp is mostly hidden in the photograph along the left side of the pillow, I expected that determining the black plate might be difficult. Fortunately, black plate 2 at this position includes a very strong re-entry with numerous marks of upward doubling that appear quite clearly on the pillow. These include distinct black marks in the "2" of the right value tablet and a rather ghostly but discrete upward doubling of the "X" in "XMAS". Other marks that can be slightly discerned on the pillow include a horizontal line through several letters of "WE HOLD A VASTER EMPIRE THAN HAS BEEN", a doubling of the border line above that text, and a series of dots across the top margin of the stamp. With this information, the stamp on the pillow can be confidently identified as coming from plate/position 2A7. The key characteristics of that plate/position are shown in Figure 2 below.

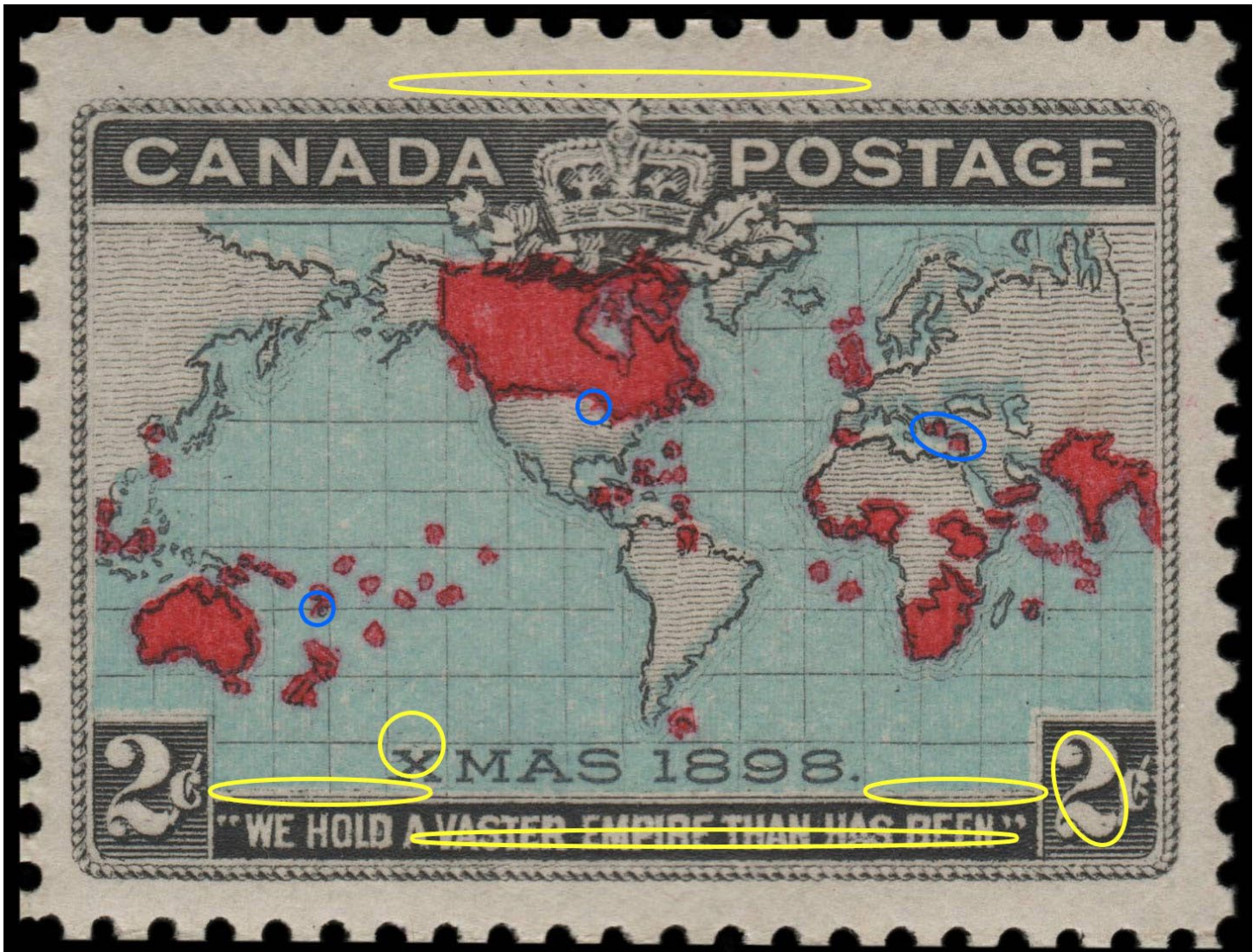


Figure 2: Position 2A7 Map stamp showing key red plate features highlighted in blue and black plate re-entry features highlighted in yellow.

This interesting re-entry is one of my favourite Map stamp varieties, making the pillow even more special. I have already ordered one for myself. The Vintage Map Co. website estimates delivery within Canada in 2-5 business days, so it is still not too late to order a pillow as a Christmas gift for yourself or a Map stamp collector friend. The direct product link is: <https://vintagemapco.com/collections/pillows/products/vintage-canada-stamp-pillow>

Map Finds and Curiosities

As Shared by Friends and Study Group Members

First up is an interesting cover shared by Arnie Janson. The cover appears to pay the 7¢ registered letter rate to the United States. The highlight of the cover is the trio of Map stamps that each feature the imprint in the bottom margin. The leftmost map is a nice deep blue ocean copy from plate/position 2A98. The other two Maps are both from 1A93 but include both the light blue and lavender ocean shades. Arnie notes that the leftmost ½¢ Victoria Numeral stamp includes a strong re-entry as listed by Ralph Trimble from plate 1R, position 68.

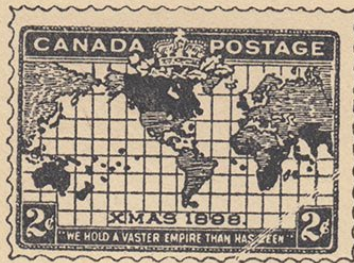
The reverse of the cover shows a sharp purple handstamp that was added by the receiving Registry Division of the New York General Post Office. The large letter "B" is one of nine different letters that were used to identify the specific Examiner who received and processed each item. The May, 27 date of the Windsor Ontario post office and the May, 29 date of the New York post office illustrate just how efficient the cross-border postal system was back in 1901.



Next up, Rick Friesen shared an old Christmas card he acquired recently on eBay. The card was produced by a stamp dealer in England (date unknown) and shows a Map stamp on the front complete with a greeting that plays on the word "vaster".

It always amazes me how much material is out there which acknowledges or celebrates the Map stamp as a Christmas commemorative stamp.

*Christmas Greetings
From one Philatelist to another*



*May your Collection grow
"vaster yet" during a Happy
and Prosperous New Year.*

Published by
STAMP COLLECTING, LTD.,
428 Strand, London, W.C.2, England.

Finally, we have a facsimile of an old philatelic article shared by noted postal history aficionado and dealer, Grégoire Teyssier. The short article comes from the first issue of The Mount Royal Stamp News back in 1900 and appears to have been picked up from a news item in the Montreal Herald newspaper. In it, an unnamed collector explains how he was able to cut some Maps stamps in half and use them as bisects to pay the 1¢ postage rate to mail some test letters to himself. He was apparently successful in passing three of these bisected Map letters through the mail system. On the fourth try, the postman tried to charge him a 2¢ fee for insufficient postage. He must have declined to pay since he mentions that the final letter would have gone to the Dead Letter Department.

This amusing little story illustrates just how “unofficial” many of the covers from that time period with bisects on them may be.

The Mount Royal Stamp News

VOL. 1.

APRIL 1ST.

No. 1

A CURIOSITY

[From Montreal Herald].

At the beginning of last week I cut a 2 cent map stamp in two, vertically, intending to use each half for a 1 cent stamp. Taking the upper half, I put it on a letter, addressed it to myself, mailed it, and the next morning it reached me. The next day I took the lower half, did the same as before, and I got it all right. On Wednesday I took another map stamp cut it in two down the middle and stuck one-half on an envelope, and the very same afternoon received it. Seeing it was so successful, I repeated this with the other half,



DID DUTY FOR A ONE CENT STAMP.

and the next morning the postman asked me for two cents to pay for a letter that had not been sufficiently prepaid. He handed it to me, and, to my surprise, it was the letter I had addressed to myself. Needless to say, it is now in the Dead Letter Department.

BNAPS Xmas 1898 Map Stamp Study Group

Chairman & Report Co-editor: Rick Friesen
Stittsville, Ontario
Email: rickfriesen5@gmail.com

Report Editor: Scott Robinson
Pierrefonds, Quebec
Email: scott@flyspecker.com

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.
All other correspondence should be addressed to the Chairman, Rick Friesen.

All articles and images are copyright ©2025 by the author and/or study group.