

THE 1898 CHRISTMAS MAP STAMP NEWSLETTER

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The Journal of the Map Stamp Study Group of the British North America Philatelic Society (1999)

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HOW WERE THEY PRINTED?

In the last issue of our newsletter we discussed the method which the printer, American Bank Note, may have used in the printing of the Map Stamp, and set forth a philosophy as to the reasons why four plates were essential to this process. Subsequent to the newsletter having reached the members, we have heard from three subscribers, concerning this article.

One of these responses was from Ken Kershaw, the co-author of that marvelous publication on plating. Ken sent a most absorbing article, in which he suggests that our assumptions about the printing process are inaccurate. We are printing his full article in this issue which sets out not only the reasons for his comments, but as well is a fascinating treatise on the methods used to complete the manufacture of the plates themselves.

Upon receipt of this article, your editor contacted Ken, with a view to visiting him in Ancaster, at his son's establishment, The Rousseau House, which I understand has a marvelous bill of fare. The intention was to review both of our ideas on this most intriguing subject. Unfortunately time has not permitted us meeting as yet, however the intention is still extant.

In the meantime let me set forth my response to Ken's philosophy.

At the outset let me clarify my previous comments by stating that I was only making reference to the Four Platen Press printing process with regards to the printing of the black plates, and was not suggesting that this process was also used to print the colours, which were applied each as separate step. The process for the application of the colours was a completely different procedure and it was intended that this would be dealt with as separate articles in future issues. Ken has

already covered some of this aspect in his article, and this is a most welcome contribution which will be expanded upon later.

Now back to the Four Platen Press. In spite of Ken's most emphatic comments to the contrary, I still believe that this process of printing was a distinct possibility. I make this comment for a couple of reasons, the most compelling of which is the apparent urgency for the need of a fourth plate, being Plate 5, to be completed. There does not appear to be any sound reason for this plate being rushed into production, with all of the various faults it had, other than the fact that it was needed in order for the production runs to be achieved. i. e. It was essential for the production process to have four plates in use at the same time.

It is proposed that this discussion, and our varying viewpoints on this matter, will be one of the topics for discussion with Ken, when we meet in Ancaster. There will be further comments on this aspect of the printing of the Map Stamp subsequent to this forum.

QUANTITIES & DELIVERIES

One of the other comments which was received in conjunction with the article on printing, was from the esteemed Map Stamp collector, Roger Boisclair¹. He kindly forwarded information gleaned from the Ottawa Archives, with respect to the quantities of the Map Stamp printed, and the various dates that quantities were delivered. These copies of the American Banknote Company records were most helpful in clarifying many issues with respect to the Map Stamp, and should be most helpful in assessing when various varieties of the stamp were in use.

The particular pages of the order book dealing with Imperial Postage, as the Map

¹ R. Boisclair co-author with K. A. Kershaw
PLATING THE CANADIAN MAP STAMP
Plate 4. Private Press Dec 2003.

Stamp is properly designated, occupy two pages, one detailing the dates upon which the stamps were printed and shipped, and the other detailing the order itself, as well billing details. A copy of the original order page is reproduced on page six of this newsletter.

The editor was not aware of this information being available at the time of compiling the last article, and accordingly wishes to amend the information with respect to printing times especially,

The information contained within the register from the AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY leaves one to ponder when and how the colours were determined especially if we look at the order itself in this regard., as there are no specification as to the colours which we have become to accept as shades of Lavender and shades of Blue It is entirely possible as well as probable these were approved by some proofs. However since the colours vary so greatly one wonders.

IN MEMORIAM

AS WE GO TO PRESS WE ARE MOST
SADDENED TO HAVE LEARNED OF
THE DEATH OF
HARRY SUTHERLAND, Q.C..

Harry was unsurpassed in
philatelic pursuits serving as
Chairman of the Vincent Graves
Greene Philatelic Research
Foundation and Past President
and Secretary of the Royal
Philatelic Society of Canada as
well as an International Judge
under F.I.P. Harry had been a
member of our group since its
revival in 1999.

Harry's passing will be mourned
by the philatelic community
worldwide.

HOW THEY WERE PRINTED-ANOTHER VIEWPOINT.

Contributed by K. A. Kershaw¹

In the fall issue of the last Newsletter was a provocative article based largely on some of the early correspondence between Bradley and Whitworth, but lacking any real evidence. I will provide here rather more compelling evidence, which shows the impossibility of using the Four-Platen Power Press for the printing of the Map Stamp. I will also review in doing so, some of the problems encountered with the printing of the Map Stamp.

Firstly it is important to recognise that the early multicoloured Map Stamp was a remarkable achievement, that should stand in its proper place as the first elaborate multicoloured stamp ever produced with a complex engraved structure. It was not however the first such stamp. The Federal Republic of Switzerland beat us to it with, the Rayon # 1, illustrated below.



The Rayon # 1, imperforate black, with a central white cross set in a red shield, with blued background design, that was issued in 1850 (Scott Catalogue #7).

The example shown here is cancelled with a blue rosette of the Canton of Zurich:

In contrast to the Swiss stamp, the Map Stamp had a much more complex design with an elegant twisted cable frame in black, and most intricate red and blue plates to overprint. The twisted cable design did not stand up to plate wear very well and led to a considerable amount of retouching. Furthermore, two complex additional plates were required for the addition of the blue oceans and the red "British Empire".

The construction of these colour plates particularly, presented serious problems, with no obvious standard technique available for such complex colour plates. It has often been suggested that electrotyping was used, but this method does not produce the errors so characteristic of the Map Stamp (see below). The complex design of the Map Stamp was indeed boldly conceived, but technically way ahead of its time, and there were subsequently enormous printing and production problems down the road. As a direct result, it was decades before another multi-coloured stamp was attempted in Canada.

The production of the 5 black plates was reasonably straightforward, each image being entered from the transfer die sequentially. A scribing tool centered in the Gulf of Tonkin produced a constant radius arc in the LR corner, and in so doing left what we now all know now as the "Tonkin dot". This was then followed by a series of hand-scribed arcs above, with a constant radius to position the next arc, and so on. Plate 5 may have been done in a similar way, but most positions show no trace of an arc or a dot, but a few do. The arc remnant centres from the point of the scribing tool have largely remained as Tonkin dots in plates 1-4 which as Bradley correctly

pointed out, were unique for each position and plate, since they were all done by hand.

Unfortunately, although Bradley's hand drawn characterisation of these dots is clear enough (Bradley pg 14) his own interpretation of their position for individual stamps was extremely variable and unreliable, to such an extent that they were barely usable to confirm the position of a stamp (Kershaw-1).

Finally with the introduction of modern scanning techniques it has been shown that the Tonkin dots are indeed definitive for each position (Kershaw-2)

Additionally, Bradley has listed a considerable number of black criteria defining a position *but also defining a specific Plate* ranging from small dots, long tool marks, to re-entries, and Kershaw (1-2) has added additional overlooked re-entries to the list. As a result, in Plate 1 there are re-entries in positions 3, 89, 93 & 94. In Plate 2 the re-entries are in positions, 17, 19, 27, 29, 37, 39, 47 & 84. In Plate 3 positions 20, 21, 47 & 88.

Accordingly, all three plates are largely completely different in the positions of re-entry. There is an even larger degree of contrast between the extent of cable retouches in the three the plates (see Bradley pg 27). In addition there are also innumerable toolmarks scattered over the first three plates. Outstandingly the long tool marks through "CANADA" in 1-A-33 and through the Pacific in 1-A-54, illustrate clearly the certainty of variation between each of the plates made (see also Bradley pgs 30-33). These variations are tied to a single printed plate and are used extensively as plating criteria.

Imagine the complicated result if 4 plates were made for a single plate printing to be used in a Four-Platen Press, and then further complicated by having a further three plates printed the same way. Absolute heaven for the enthusiast of such minutia! This however, sadly, did not happen, and I infer the Four-Platen Press was NOT used even for the black plates. When it comes to the red plate the impossibility of producing 3 identical additional plates becomes even more extreme:

It has previously been generally agreed that the red and blue plates were set up using electrotyping. Thus using a "die image" a plaster, or paper mulch surface, was carefully tamped down on the die image to receive the desired imprint. This was repeated for the required number of images to be made. These images were then all carefully coated with graphite so they would conduct an electric current, and then each image was laid down in all of the 100 plate positions. Using the process of electrolysis, an even metal coat, usually copper, was then deposited on the surface of all of the positional images, producing the requisite complete plate ready for printing.

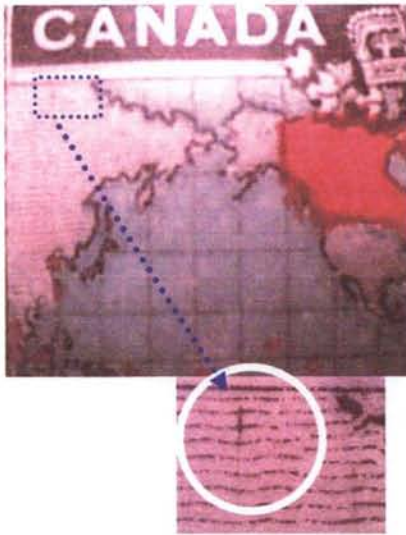
However, I now do not believe this was the chosen production route. The only major error that can occur when using the electrotype technique is from incomplete de-gassing of the plaster used to get an impression. This can result in minute bubbles that can ruin the "perfect" impression during printing (Williams). However, the technique is generally very good, so good that it does not produce the type of variants seen typically and characteristically in the Map Stamp red plate.

(cont'd....)

¹ Kenneth A. Kershaw co-author
PLATING THE CANADIAN MAP STAMP Private Press Dec 2003,

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SWORDS & DRAGONS

AREA 1 MONGOLIAN SLASHES

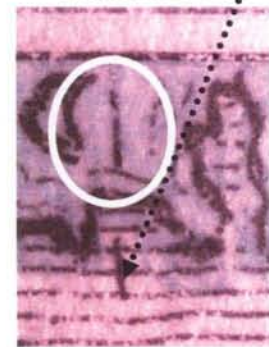


AREA 4 SIBERIAN SLASH

AREA BLOWN UP



LONGITUDE LINE



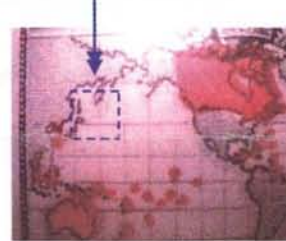
AREA 2 ALASKAN DOTS

LONGITUDE LINE

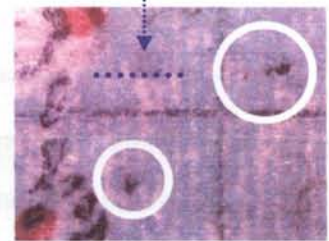


AREA 5. THE "ORIENTAL DRAGONS"

AREA BLOWN UP

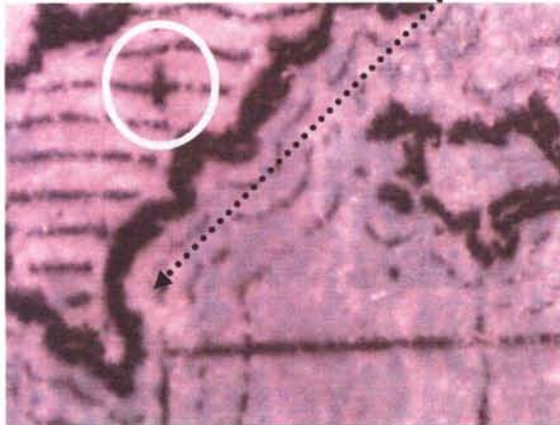


TROPIC OF CANCER



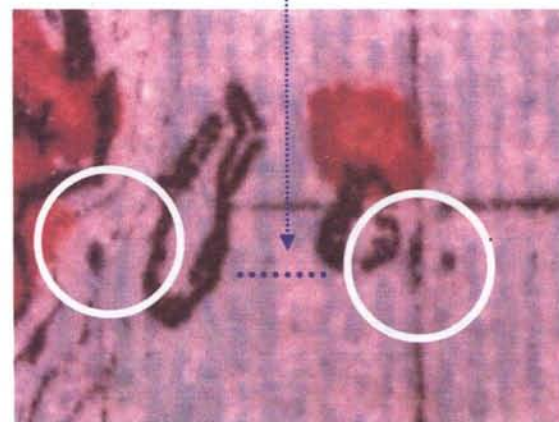
AREA 3 GREENLAND SLASH

LONGITUDE LINE



AREA 6. THE "MADAGASCAR DOTS"

TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

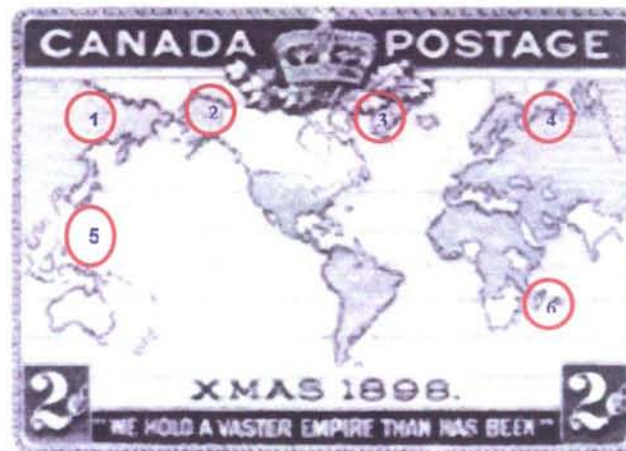


SWORDS & DRAGONS

When one examines the Map Stamp closely, you will find a number of areas where dots and slashes appear consistently in the same areas of the stamp. These various dots and slashes do not appear to be significant of any geographic area or other noteworthy design features, but appear to be simply attributable to consistent blemishes in the plates from which the stamps were printed. Some of these are present in varying degrees on various plates and some seem to be present only on certain plates

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

X



To identify these various areas, names have been assigned consistent with the area on the stamp where the blemishes are located. To further assist the reader in locating these on the stamp the areas have been circled and numbered as set out on the above copy of a black imperf.

1. THE MONGOLIAN SLASH(ES)

These slashes appear intermittently, sometimes as one, and other time two, on various stamps, and appear to be remnants of the longitudes lines, that were laid out on the map design. It would seem that at some time in the design, the longitude lines extended into the land areas, and were then removed as the parallel wavy lines designating the land masses were added.

2. THE ALASKAN DOTS

The two dots which appear consistently in all issued stamps but sometimes in varying sizes, have no apparent reason, other than they were a blemish in the master palte.

3. THE GREENLAND SLASH

The Greenland slash appears similar to the Mongolian and Siberian slash, being a remnant of the seventh longitude line, of the seventeen that cover the ocean areas. This slash is constant on all stamps.

4. THE SIBERIAN SLASH

As was noted under the Mongolian and Greenland slash, this also appears to be a remnant of the longitude line, second from the right hand side of the stamp. This is also a constant on all stamps.

5. THE CHINA/TONKIN SEA DRAGONS

The China Dragon, in the North China Sea, appears to be two enlarged dots that were originally to define the Tropic of Cancer. These dots appear consistently on all issued Map Stamps. The dot to the East of the Tonkin Gulf has no reasonable explanation, but may have a relationship to the original alignment of the plates. This dot does appear in varying degrees on each stamp.

6. THE MADAGASCAR DOTS

These appear to be enlargements of the dots originally used to denote the Tropic of Capricorn, and they appear in varying sizes and shapes on various stamps, but they are consistently on all stamps examined to date.

HOW THEY WERE PRINTED-ANOTHER VIEWPOINT (cont'd)

During my early work on the Map Stamp I was struck by the mathematical precision of the three additional "islands" off the west coast of New Zealand and then running up into the Pacific in Position 43.

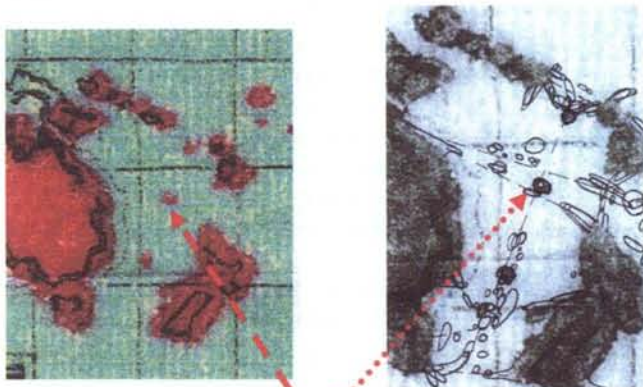
At the time I did not attach any significance to this feature at all, apart from its striking appearance. The following year when I was working with Plate 5, I found to my astonishment numerous positions with replicates where small round Pacific islands were surrounded by superb small box-like frames. I had always been puzzled, and I imagine numerous other philatelists have puzzled, how all these plating criteria of dots, lines, and arcs so unique to each position had appeared during the printing, and now here was the answer.

The red plate was set up as a template where each island dot was supported by a frame. New Zealand was set at a constant positional distance from Australia; Australia set in the correct positional distance from Asia, and so on, all simply by a stamped-out template. In the image reproduced opposite from Plate 5 position 52, even New Zealand has part of its supporting template visible at the top.

The red plate was NOT prepared copying perfect images in plaster or paper followed by electrotyping. It was prepared by stamping out a series of **templates** which were then very carefully attached to the bottom of each position on the plate. The bad news though, is that to obtain a perfect printed image, all the parts of the **template** itself have to be below the level of, for example, the small island images that are to be printed.

If any part of the supporting template surrounding an island is accidentally raised to the same level as the island itself, then it will also be inked and printed as shown in the illustrated cases, where presumably a complete segment of the template had accidentally lifted. When one considers the extreme difficulty of attaching each positional template so that none of its parts were elevated, then inked and printed, it is perhaps surprising that we have as few plating criteria as we actually have!

Below is a section of the Map Stamp showing the East Coast of Australia and the Islands of Tasmania New Zealand and the lower section of the Pacific Island Group

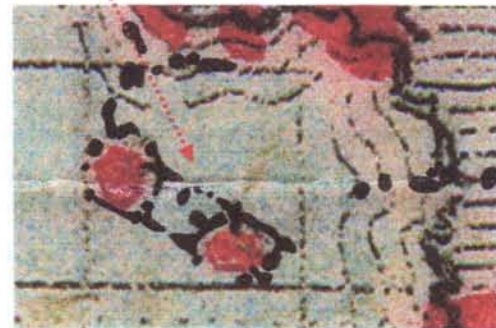


The three mathematically aligned dots to the west and NW of New Zealand, with subsequently all the potential plating criteria overlayed from all the plates. The resultant inferred template structures from this segment of the Map Stamp are then sketched in.

Detail of a series of "boxes" taken from a replicate of Plate 5, where the template segment was poorly attached or had subsequently lifted.



Below is a section of the Map Stamp showing the Lower West Coast of Africa Islands of St. Helena & Ascension



The overlay of all the plating criteria used for St. Helena & Ascension off the west coast of Africa, showing the same incomplete box structures and their attachment lines to the rest of Africa.

It does however now explain where all our plating criteria do actually come from. It also explains why New Zealand for example, is *always* at the correct distance from Australia, and why even all the small islands are largely in the same position to each other throughout all the 5 plates. Similarly, the mathematical linear sequence of the additional islands west and NW of New Zealand in position 43, also now becomes clear, they are part of the main structural component of the of the template itself that contain Australia and New Zealand.

However, of importance to the discussion here, all of the red plating criteria that define each position are unique to that position. They are produced as a result of the exact way each template was placed in each specific position by hand, and to what degree of perfection. In the first produced single red plate, we have a defined plating pattern. Any subsequent red plate would be different. If there had been another 3 plates made which would be required for the power Platten Press all the positions would have been different in all three plates, and to plate these first four printings would have indeed been wonderfully challenging.

The 5th plate was printed from a new red plate and it is, as expected, completely different. This plate also had to be produced in a rush since Plate 4 had been suddenly abandoned for some unknown reason, perhaps physical damage.

(cont'd.....)

HOW, WHY & WHERE

The adjacent column shows a copy of the original sheet from the American Bank Note company order book regarding **POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT - ORDERS**, and specifically the November 24, 1898 order regarding *"Imperial Postage"*, or the *Map Stamp*. The interesting features surrounding this order are the quantity and the colours. As can be seen the order specifies:

Print 20,000,000 ¹⁰⁰/_{2c} Postage Stamps - =200,000 Imp- in Black- 100,000 Imp. Typo tint in Red & Blue, 100,000 Imp. Typo tint in Red & Green.

At first reading this appeared to indicate that the 200,000 Imp in Black indicated Imperfs, but obviously it is intended to mean 200,000 impressions, or pages in Black with 100,000 Red & Green and 100,000 Red & Blue. The order further states each page was to be **Gum & Perforate on Paper 12" x 15 1/2 "**

This does appear to raise further queries which may establish a basis for further research:

- A. What was the reason for the oceans to be different colours, Blue & Green? Was there a perceived variance in ocean colours between the Atlantic & Pacific and this was intended to satisfy both constituents?
- B. Did the Blue turn out to be the Lavender, and the Green became what we now term the Blue varieties?
- C. Can we determine from the dates of cancellations colours when the various colours in that mix were issued, given the time table of production from the billings etc.?

1
74 AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY, OTTAWA.
POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT-ORDERS.

November 24th 1898

- Imperial Postage -

Print 20,000,000 ¹⁰⁰/_{2c} Postage stamps
= 200,000 Imps -
in Black -

<i>Billed</i>		
<i>Feb 28</i>	<i>9710.000 -</i>	
<i>June 31</i>	<i>1.500.000 -</i>	
<i>Apr. 30</i>	<i>1400.000 -</i>	<i>100,000 Imp. Typo tint</i>
<i>May 31</i>	<i>900.000 -</i>	<i>in Red & Blue -</i>
<i>June 30</i>	<i>400.000 -</i>	<i>100,000 Imp. Typo tint</i>
<i>Aug 31</i>	<i>500.000 -</i>	<i>in Red & Green.</i>
<i>Sept 30</i>	<i>1.600.000 -</i>	
<i>Oct 31</i>	<i>1.700.000</i>	<i>Gum & perforate</i>
<i>Nov 30</i>	<i>1.700.000</i>	
<i>Dec 31</i>	<i>1.017.500</i>	<i>Paper 12 x 15 1/2 -</i>
	<i>19,927.500</i>	

Nov 24th 1898
R.M. Cook
D.P.M.

The above copy of the order book is provided courtesy of Roger Boisclair.

HOW THEY WERE PRINTED-ANOTHER VIEWPOINT (cont'd)

As a result of the rushed production, half the transfer die entries were entered too quickly with resultant shallow images that wore extremely rapidly, and led to a massive series of re-entries in the weak half of the plate (Boisclair & Kershaw).

Equally, in Plate 5, the red plate templates also had to be added to the plate too rapidly with the resulting frequency of boxed islands. It is largely in Plate 5 that the template island boxes are always clearly seen. However, careful hunting through replicates of Plates 1-3 also provide occasional partial examples.

Why this rather crude method of making the red plate was used in the first place remains a mystery when electrotyping indeed could have done a perfect job. Perhaps no appropriate electrolysis equipment, and the skills needed to use it were available. Whatever the reason, it would seem from the evidence that the **FOUR PLATTEN POWER PRESS, or electrotyping** were never ever used to print the Canadian Map Stamp.

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