

Dots and Scratches

Re-entries and Constant Plate Varieties

Study Group of the BNAPS

Edited by Michael D. Smith



Three Pence #12

Re-entered Imprint Position 3, Pane B

The re-entered imprint is present on all position 3, pane B three pence stamps.

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FROM YOUR EDITOR

This issue is a lead up to BNAPEX 2015 Niagara Falls 11-13 Sept. 2015. The Re-entry and Constant Plate Variety Study Group Meeting is scheduled for Sunday Sept. 13 from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm. I will be presenting a talk on "Whitworth's Plate Flaws on the One Cent Decimal Issue". We will also have time to discuss and share any material you may want to bring with you. I look forward to seeing you at BNAPEX 2015'

In this issue we have a nice article by Scott Robinson that presents an explanation for the "dash in 2" varieties on the two cent Decimal issue. He presents a very plausible explanation.

Geoff Browning gives us another article discussing the plating of the 1/2 cent Large Queen in his ongoing study.

Jim McCormick gives us an interesting look at the three cent Small Queen with a flaw in "N" of CENTS variety.

Guy Jeffery sent beautiful images showing a red brown six cent Small Queen "hairball" variety on cover and it is shown in an article along with my copy of this variety. Guy wonders if there are any other covers with this variety present on them.

I have had some serious computer problems recently as I lost three hard drives in quick succession. One was my main backup which failed during my attempt to use it to restore my computer. If any of you have submitted article for inclusion in Dots and Scratches and I have not used it, please resubmit it as I am sure I lost some.

The study group now has 25 paid members. I look forward to hearing from you if you have any requests or suggestions for Dots and Scratches articles. Of course contributed articles are always welcomed.

See you at BNAPEX,

Mike Smith



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An Explanation for the “Dash in 2” Variety of the 2 Cent First Decimal Issue

By Scott Robinson, FlySpecker.com

The 2 cent value of the first decimal issue is known to have very few significant plate varieties despite several plate updates which included the addition of imprints and numerous manual retouches. The 2015 Unitrade catalogue lists three plate varieties including the “scratches on neck” from 2 positions, the various extended framelines from more than 20 positions, and the “dash in lower right 2” which it lists as #20v with the note that it appears in “several positions”.

The “dash in 2” variety is well-known, having been noted by Senator James A. Calder in his extensive work on Canada's first decimal issue in the first half of the twentieth century. Later, Geoffrey Whitworth would note in his *"The First Decimal Issue of Canada 1859-68"* that this variety must be the result of a flaw on one of the two reliefs on the transfer role since "it occurs on many stamps and is exactly alike on each occasion". The multiplicity of its occurrence on the plate would certainly suggest that it originates from the transfer role. However, from my own observation, I would have to disagree with Mr. Whitworth regarding each occurrence being exactly the same. Indeed, this variety looks slightly different on almost all copies where I have observed it.

The variety appears as a dash near the bottom of the lower right "2" value. The length, strength, and particularly the position of the dash can vary from copy to copy. Figure 1 shows a typical clean copy with a reasonably strong dash that just touches the outer edge of the “2”. Examples of other copies are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1. A typical “Dash in 2” variety.



Figure 2. Examples of different “Dash in 2” varieties.

A scan of a full proof sheet of this stamp that I have examined showed the variety in at least 35 of the 100 plate positions. These are indicated in Figure 2. The random distribution of the variety throughout the pane would suggest that this is not likely the result of the siderographer switching between two reliefs on the transfer roll when laying down the plate. The shifting position of the dash in relation to the rest of the stamp design also makes it unlikely to be caused by switching between transfer roll reliefs.

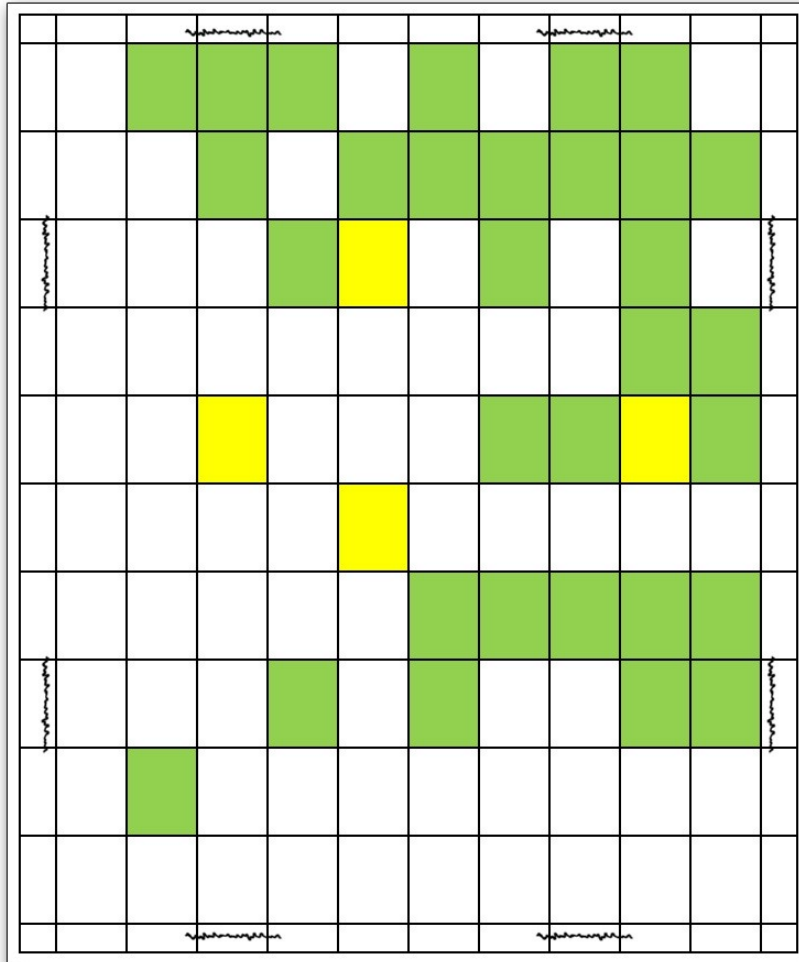


Figure 2. The pane layout of the 2 cent decimal showing imprint locations and the random positions of the “dash in 2” variety highlighted in green, and yellow for very weak positions.

In his BNAPS handbook, *“Plating Canada’s 2c Stamp of 1864”*, Arthur H. Groten mentions that the location of the dash within the “2” can vary markedly in copies from different plate positions. He also states that “there has been no satisfactory explanation for the cause” of the flaw. So what is the most likely explanation for the many appearances of this variety throughout the plate? The only logical answer is that the dashes originate from a source that enables them to shift location or not appear at all for each of the plate positions. This is a similar situation to that described by George C. Marler in *“The Admiral Issue of Canada”* involving dashes appearing on the 7 cent red brown Admiral value. The explanation is that the marks are part of at least one of the transfer role reliefs but they are in the upper margin significantly above the stamp design so that they appear in the stamp that is rocked in above the current position.

When the relief with the dash in the top margin is rocked in far enough and with sufficient force, it transfers the regular impression of the stamp along with a dash high above the top margin. See the red impression in Figure 3. When the stamp immediately above is rocked in, it transfers a new impression with the dash showing through in the non-printing white space of the lower right “2”. The location of the dashes may shift slightly depending on the accuracy of the horizontal and vertical alignment between the impressions for each plate position. The dash may also appear much weaker or not appear at all if the relief on the transfer role is not rocked in far enough or with sufficient force to also reproduce the dash high above the intended impression.



Figure 3. The first relief impression (in red) is rocked into the plate along with the dash high in the top margin. The second impression (in grey) is rocked in leaving the dash to show through in the non-printing area of the lower right 2.

Referring back to the plate layout shown in Figure 2, it can be seen, as expected, that there are no dash varieties in any of the impressions in the bottom row. Examination of a high resolution proof scan generously provided by John Jamieson of the Saskatoon Stamp Centre reveals that several of the impressions in the top row show the expected dash in the top margin of the pane. Figure 4 shows positions 2, 3 and 4 from the top row below the left imprint. Each of these stamps exhibits the “dash in 2” variety and the last two impressions also include a strong dash above them in the top margin of the pane, including one above the imprint.

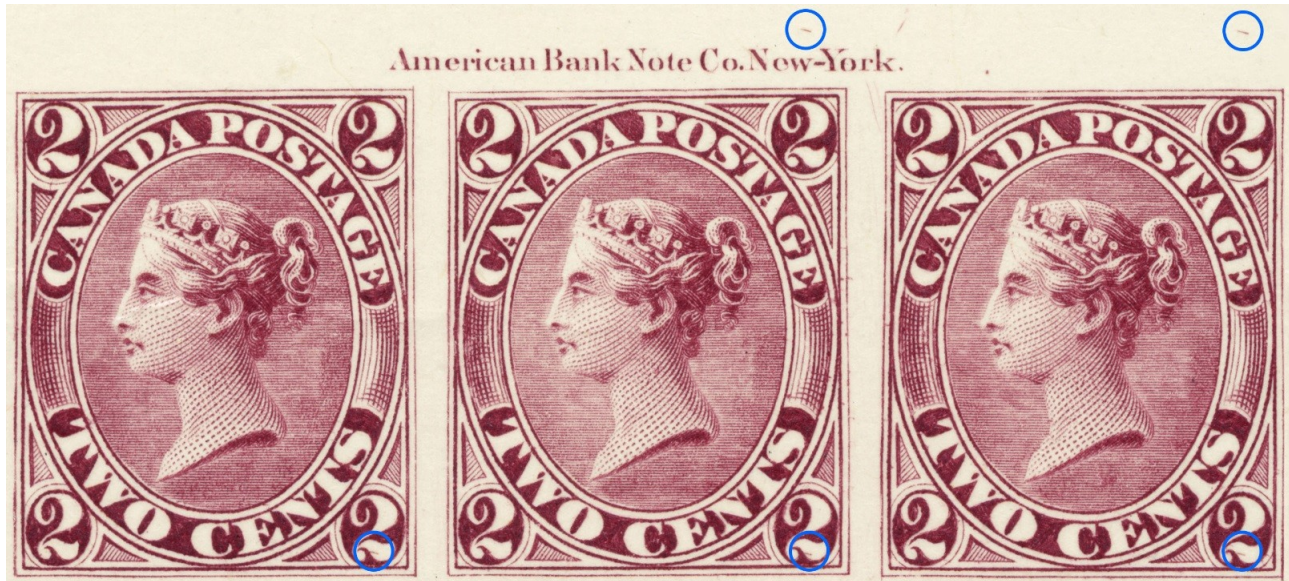


Figure 4. Detail from first row of plate proof showing dashes in the lower right “2” values and in the upper margin of the pane.

In conclusion, it should be noted that while the use of two separate reliefs on the transfer roll is not required to produce the intermittent “dash in 2” variety, it is still possible that more than one relief was used by the siderographer during the plate preparation process. The random appearance of the variety throughout the various positions on the plate suggests that it is caused by the unintended over-rocking of some of the plate impressions rather than intermittent use of two distinct transfer reliefs. Whitworth mentions that this variety does not appear in the early printings of this stamp. So it is logical to conclude that the dash appeared on the transfer roll from damage during some later repairs to the plate or that a second relief with the dash already in the top margin was placed into first use for these repairs.

References:

2015 The Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps, Ed. D. Robin Harris, The Unitrade Press, page 45

The First Decimal Issue of Canada 1859-68, Geoffrey Whitworth, The Royal Philatelic Society, 1966, pages 24-25

Plating Canada’s 2c Stamp of 1864, a BNAPS Handbook, Arthur H. Groten

The Admiral Issue of Canada, George C. Marler, The American Philatelic Society, 1982, pages 376-379

Varieties on the 1/2-cent Large Queen [Article 3]

By Geoff Browning

This article is the third in a series on the half-cent Large Queen. In this article we examine further the five-by-two block of ten discussed in the second article, noting those features which will allow identification of other positions from the half cent Large Queen sheet. Block position 4 (also sheet position 4) is perhaps the most well-known position on the half cent Large Queen sheet as it shows the so-called “H”, or “bumble bee” spur. This is, of course, the final form of the progressive spur noted in the previous article of this series. Figure 1 below shows this feature in its “pre-re-entry” form (that is, pre-re-entry relative to the position 1, 11 and 21 re-entries which probably occurred between 1874 and 1876). It is unknown at this point whether this feature was altered at the time of the position 1, 11 and 21 re-entries as I have no post-re-entry multiples extending beyond sheet position 3.

Figure 1: “H”-shaped (or “bumble bee”) spur extending upwards from the “reversed C” shaped curl above the “H” of “HALF” at sheet position 4 (pre-re-entry example)



Block (also sheet) position 4 also exhibits a distinguishing feature on its upper frame line as shown below in Figure 2. As will be shown below and in subsequent articles, this feature, in somewhat varying shapes, occurs on other positions in sheet column 4.

Figure 2: Short black line extending diagonally upwards to the right from the frame line above the “P” of “POSTAGE” at sheet position 4 (pre-re-entry example)



Moving on to block position 5 (also sheet position 5), this position contains a “line” feature somewhat similar to that previously shown on position 4. Figure 3 below shows this feature from the pre-re-entry block of ten.

Figure 3: Short black line extending diagonally upwards to the left from the frame line above the “O” of “POSTAGE” at sheet position 5 (pre-re-entry example)



Having reached the right edge of the block under examination, I now turn to the second row of the block, beginning at block position 6 (sheet position 11). Figure 4 below shows the pre-re-entry version of the well-known progressive “spur” which occurs on thirty-one positions of the sheet. Sheet position 11 has the distinction of being the first position on the sheet laid down with this spur and may be said to show the most “primitive” form of the spur.

Figure 4: Black “spur” extending upwards from the “reversed C” shaped curl above the “H” of “HALF” and shorter black “spur” extending from the black shading beneath the “reversed C”-shaped curl above the “H” of “HALF” at sheet position 11 (pre-re-entry example)

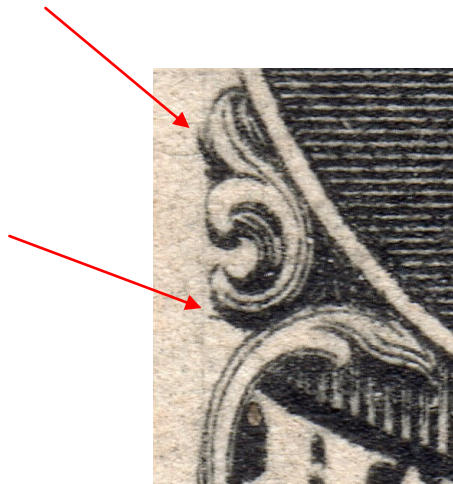
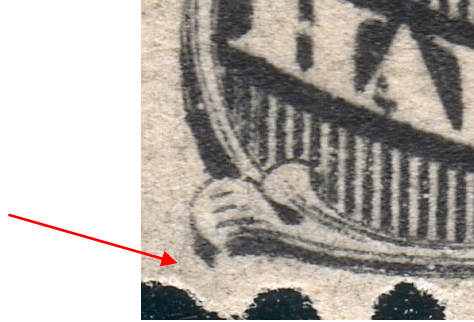


Figure 4 also shows a much shorter black “spur” extending from the black shading beneath the “reversed C”-shaped curl above the “H” of “HALF”. As will be seen below, this feature also occurs on post- re-entry printings

As with all of sheet column 1, sheet position 11 also shows the absence of a guide dot off the lower left corner of the design. A pre-entry example of this is shown below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Absence of a black dot off the lower left corner of the design at sheet position 11 (pre-re-entry example)



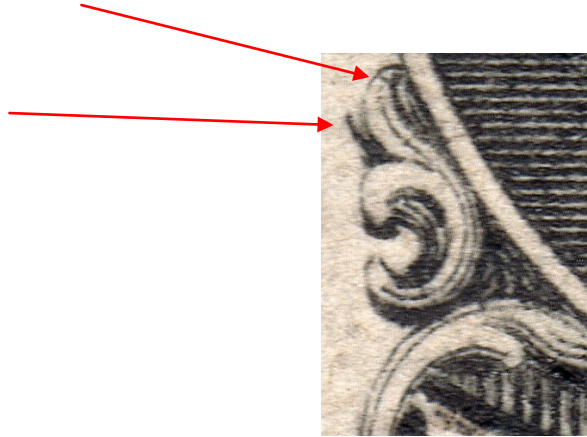
Sheet position 11, in its pre-re-entry state also shows another well-known feature of a number of sheet positions – the “whitened” chignon. This feature may be referred to as progressive as extent and depth of the “whitening” varies across the sheet positions where it occurs, though there does not seem to be any particular pattern to this variation. Figure 7 below shows this feature from position 6 of the block of ten currently under examination.

Figure 7: Progressive “whitened” chignon at sheet position 11 (pre-re-entry example)



Moving on to block position 7 (sheet position 12), this position exhibits yet another degree of “spur” as shown below in Figure 8. Figure 8 also shows that sheet position 12 exhibits an inverted “T-shaped” black line cutting diagonally across the upper tip of the ornament containing the “reverse C-shaped” curl above the “H” of “HALF, as position 2 does in its pre-re-entry state.

Figure 8 Black “spur” extending upwards from the “reversed C” shaped curl above the “H” of “HALF” and an inverted “T-shaped” black line cutting diagonally across the upper tip of the ornament containing the “reverse C-shaped” curl above the “H” of “HALF” at sheet position 12 (pre-re-entry example)



As shown in Figure 9 below, sheet position 12 also exhibits two other features very similar to two shown by sheet position 2 in its pre-re-entry state.

Figure 9 Curved black line extending diagonally upward to the left from the frame line above the “P” of “POSTAGE” and two squiggly black lines extending diagonally upwards from, and forming a “pyramid” on, the upper frame line above the third “A” of “CANADA” at sheet position 12 (pre-re-entry example)



Moving on to block position 8 (sheet position 13), we again encounter another degree of the “spur” as is shown below in Figure 10.

Figure 10 Black “spur” extending upwards from the “reversed C” shaped curl above the “H” of “HALF” at sheet position 13 (pre-re-entry example)



Sheet position 13 also has a rather weak guide dot at lower left which also rather distant from the design as is show somewhat indistinctly in Figure 11 below. (While this feature shows rather poorly in the block of ten currently under consideration, it shows much more clearly in another pre-re-entry block of ten in the author’s possession.)

Figure 11 “Weak” and “distant” guide dot off the lower left corner of the design at sheet position 13 (pre-re-entry example)



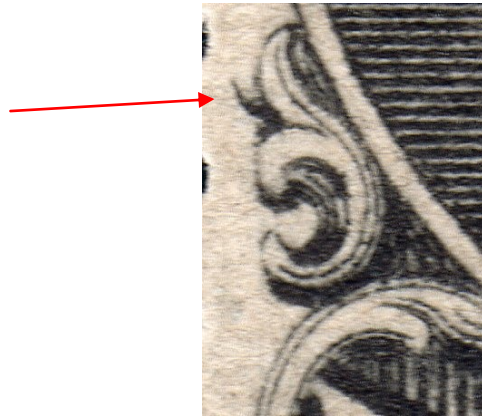
Finally, sheet position 13 exhibits a small black triangle extending from the value tablet into the white frame band just below the lower left end of the diagonal line of “1/2”. On this stamp there appears to be a second triangle to the right of the first but this second one does not show up in the second block noted above.

Figure 12 Small black triangle extending from the value tablet into the white frame band just below the lower left end of the diagonal line of “1/2” at sheet position 13 (pre-re-entry example)



Moving on to block position 9 (sheet position 14), we again encounter another degree of the “spur” as is shown below in Figure 13.

Figure 13 Black “spur” extending upwards from the “reversed C” shaped curl above the “H” of “HALF” at sheet position 14 (pre-re-entry example)



Sheet position 14 also exhibits the short black line extending from the upper frame line evident at sheet position 4 as shown below in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Short black line extending diagonally upwards to the right from the frame line above the “P” of “POSTAGE” at sheet position 14 (pre-re-entry example)



We have now reached block position 10 (sheet position 15), the last position in the pre-re-entry block of ten from the upper left corner of the sheet. This position exhibits a “large” and “distant” guide dot off the lower left corner of the design (see Figure 15).

Figure 15 “Large” and “distant” guide dot off the lower left corner of the design at sheet position 15 (pre-re-entry example)



As shown below in Figure 16, sheet position 15 also exhibits a very short black line extending from the upper frame line.

Figure 16 Very short black line extending diagonally upwards to the left from the upper frame line above the left side of the “O” of “POSTAGE” at sheet position 15 (pre-re-entry example)



This concludes our examination of the balance of the pre- and post-re-entry states of sheet positions 1 through 5 and 11 through 15 and the third article in this series.

Small Queen 3 cent “flaw in N of CENTS”

By Jim McCormick (jim@jimmc.ca)



Fig.1

The N flaw (Fig.1) is described on Bill Burden's web site as plate flaw 3F3.1 with an earliest usage of NO 21 1872 on cover, and a late usage of some time in 1874. He also mentions that it has been observed on the thick soft paper, which when dated is normally seen between late December 1870 and February 1871. Plate position is unknown.

I started the search on my first Ottawa 3 cent printings, and was pleasantly surprised to find one in an early block/4 (Fig. 2). The shade is “dull red”, the paper has a horizontal weave, and the perforations measure 12x12 on my clear instant gauge. Matching it to a dated reference collection, typical usage for this shade and paper is between late 1871 and early 1873.

This block has some interesting features. The vertical perforations at left and middle steer to the left as they move down the sheet. This leaves a left margin wide enough that this block must be from the left side of the sheet. The margin at bottom is just tall enough that if there were stamps in the sheet below the block, a trace should be visible in the attached perforation chad at bottom. It is pretty clear to me that the block is from the bottom left corner of the sheet. Some might call this a stretch. Yet, take note of the faint position dot in the lower left corner of the lower left stamp (Fig. 3). Position dots are not found in the first vertical row, as they are an artifact from entering the stamp to the left on the plate. But during initial layout of the plate, dots are punched in the four corners (the outer corners for positions 1, 10, 91, and 100). On some plates, the dot is burnished and not visible, while on others it can be visible along with guide lines.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

This should be sufficient evidence to conclude that the block is from the lower left corner of the sheet, placing the N flaw at position 81.

The final question to answer is when the N flaw was introduced. The Hillson / Nixon book on Small Queens states that seven plates of 100 covered the printings between 1870 and 1873. The flaw will exist on just one of the seven plates, but which one? With the flaw reported on thick soft paper (#37i, late 1870 printing) and the 1874 dated copy on cover, I would expect that the flaw was introduced early on one of the plates and that plate was in service for at least 3 years. There is evidence that plates 1 and 2 were used well into the 1880s, so perhaps the other plates were also in use for several years.

If the readers have more copies of this flaw available, I would appreciate high resolution scans of front and back (showing paper grain). It would be interesting to know if the flaw could be found on paper A (1870 printings), or later Montreal printings.

References:

Bill Burden's web site: <http://wgburden.com>

Canada's Postage Stamps of the Small Queen Era, 1870-1897, Hillson and Nixon, 2008

Eastern Auctions Ltd, The Ted Nixon Collection, 2012

Six Cent Small Queen “Hairball” Variety and Re-entry

By Michael D. Smith



Fig. 1 Pane B, Pos. 97

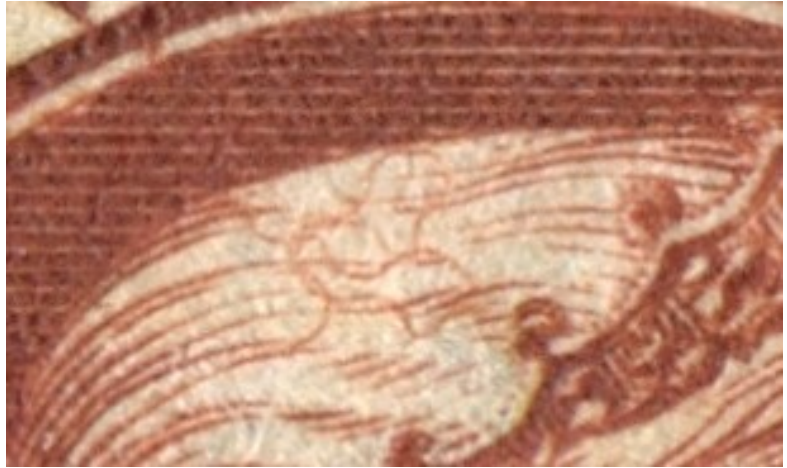


Fig. 2 The “Hairball” Flaw

The stamp in figure one is well known for the “hairball” flaw which is a jumble of lines on top of the Queen’s head (Fig. 2). This is a rather difficult flaw to find and is considered to be a rather short lived flaw.

This stamp also exhibits a nice re-entry as a counter clockwise twist affecting a great portion of the design. Figure three shows the most pronounced part of the re-entry showing in the lower right corner but other areas of the stamp show the re-entry as well.



Fig. 3

Arrows and oval indicate where some of the doubling occurs in the design.



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Guy Jeffery sent an email with the scans of this stamp on cover. The following is the message that accompanied the cover images (Figures 4 and 5):

“Here are three scans of a "hairball" on cover. As far as I know this is the only known hairball on cover, and certainly the only known cancelled with such clear fancy cancels. The cover is a Registered Province of British Columbia envelope dated 4 Feb 98 from Barkerville to Caribou BC. The back has two Barkerville and one Soda Creek CDS.

The cancels on the stamps are Lacelle 66. This is a later strike of the star and the numeral 3 is not visible.

If anyone else has a "hairball" on cover I would like to know.”

On the next page are close-up images of the stamps in figures 6 and 7.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

The variety is listed in Unitrade as 43vii. It is from pane B, position 97. Unitrade does not mention the re-entry but further more detailed information is available on Ralph Trimble's re-entries.com and Bill Burden's wgburden.com.

References:

2015 THE UNITRADE SPECIALIZED CATALOGUE OF CANADIAN STAMPS, Ed., D. Robin Harris, The Unitrade Press, pg.57.

Ralph Trimble, www.re-entries.com

Bill Burden, www.wgburden.com