

Dots and Scratches

Re-entries and Constant Plate Varieties

Study Group of the BNAPS

Edited by Michael D. Smith



15 TCviii Position 69, state 4, printing flaw 3 and short entry NE spandrel.
Printing flaw 3 is a strong scratch starting it the right of the crown and dropping under PO to the inner portrait oval.

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FROM YOUR EDITOR

Here we are at the beginning of a new year and for me a significant change in my life style. Jan. 27, 2017 I retired from the Public Works Department of the City of Oak Ridge, TN. I worked as a Senior Treatment Plant Operator with dual certification in Water Treatment and Wastewater Treatment. Through the years with the city I operated (not managed) three different treatment plants one Wastewater and two Water Treatment Plants. I now hope to have more time to pursue my hobbies. Even so I am a bit late getting this newsletter out as I tied up all the loose ends in regards to preparing for retirement.

This issue primarily centers around the Small Queen Issue. I believe it is still a worthy read for anyone who collects varieties of stamps printed from steel engraved plates.

The first story gives a few facts about the printing process and recommends a book by James H. Baxter that discusses how stamps are printed by line engraving. This is a very useful reference book and gives details I have not seen elsewhere.

The next story is about a flaw on the 1-cent Small Queen from the Montreal printings. Very few of these have been reported.

John Hillson offers up some nice plate varieties from his collection of the 2-cent Small Queens. These are nice illustrations of various flaws but many of them can occur on stamps of other denominations and issues printed from steel engraved plates so it is a worthy read.

Guy Jeffrey offers us a look at the 3-cent Small Queen showing Hurst's Major Re-entry and it is a beauty in deed.

Jim McCormick offers us further discussion on the plating of the 6-cent Small Queen with a look at four states of plate position 96.

John Hillson asked I print a letter to a correspondent he has been writing to in regard to the plating of the 6-cent Small Queen Issue. It is printed in its entirety as requested.

Lastly I present a theory on what maybe the cause of the 6-cent "Ghostly Head" printing and welcome any comments concerning the theory.

I will do my best to get articles on other issues into the next newsletter. If anyone can help out with an article or two they are always welcome.

I look forward to serving you for another year.

Best regards, Mike



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BEP Siderographer at Work

By Michael D. Smith



Washington, D.C. Siderographer transferring images from postage stamp transfer roll to steel plate at the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Courtesy of the Library of Congress

There have been quite a few inquiries about what was involved in laying out steel engraved plates. I wish to give a few highlights about the process here. I got the image on the previous page from a Library of Congress web site. The next information comes from a book by James H. Baxter, *Printing Postage Stamps by Line Engraving*. Quarterman Publications, Inc. reprinted the 1939 publication of the American Philatelic Society in 1981. This reference is still available for modest cost as a new book. It is an excellent and interesting read describing what is involved in the process of printing line engraved stamps and describing possible flaws as well.

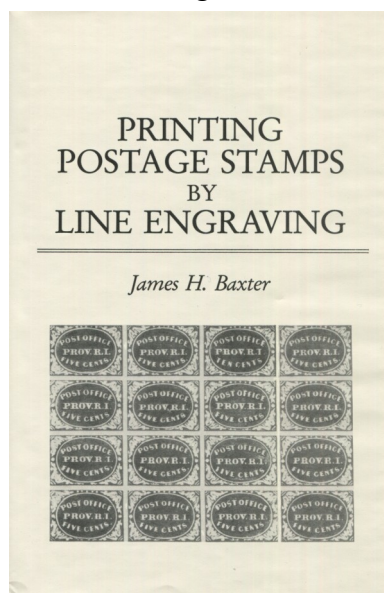
A die is made by a highly skilled engraver. Once finished it is hardened. Then they are cleaned and polished.

The die is sent to a siderographer who manually operates a transfer press which is made of solid steel construction weighing several tons. The die is set in place and a transfer roll is mounted in a mandrel and placed in the press. At a pressure between 8 and 35 tons at point of contact, depending on size of press and die, a relief image of the die is transferred to the roll. More than one image may be transferred if desired and space is available on the roll. Once the reliefs have been transferred the roll is hardened. This roll is then used to impress the images in the steel plate.

In the picture on the previous page the siderographer is holding a wheel in his left hand which is about 6 feet in diameter. This controls a rack and pinion that allows the siderographer to move the bed of the press forward or backward to a fractional part of an inch as he aligns the transfer roll for rocking each image into the plate.

Many sizes and thicknesses of plates can be used. The largest could be 20" X 29" and thicknesses maybe from 3/16" to 5/16". Flat stock plates (400 subjects) are about 19.5" X 24" and are about 1/4" thick. The dimensions are usually less after processing. Once the images are pressed into the plate it is flattened out by hammering. Then it is heated and quenched if the plate is hardened.

This is a simplified explanation the book goes into more detail.



References:

Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998023529/PP/>

Printing Postage Stamps by Line Engraving, James H. Baxter, Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1981.

Diamond Shaped Flaw on 1-cent Small Queen

By Michael D, Smith

Guy Jeffrey shared a nice used pair (Fig. 1) of the one cent Small Queen that shows a diamond shaped flaw in the Queen's hair at the back of her head on right stamp. According to R&S (1991) this was a new find reported by Mr. Mayerovitch. He found three copies all from the Montreal printing. To date very few have been found all copies so far are perforated 11.5 X 12. The flaw is quite striking and there are additional constant marks in the portrait oval below CA of CANADA as seen in close up (Fig.2).



Fig. 1 Courtesy of Guy Jeffrey



Fig. 2 Courtesy of Guy Jeffrey

Bill Burden has the following information on his web site: 1F16.1 (R&S 2-12), Triangle Flaw in the Hair, plate position unknown, Last Recorded Use June 28, 1874. Notes: Only four reported copies to date - all from the 1873-4 era and all perf. 11.5 X 12 Cover dated June 28, 1874.

I bid in Sparks Auction Sale 22 and won a mourning cover dated AU 10, 77 franked with four 1-cent SQ's (two pairs) and two single 3-cent SQ's paying the double rate to Scotland (Fig. 3). The third stamp from the left is the Triangle Flaw (Fig. 4). This is a new last recorded use date. All the stamps on the cover are from the Montreal printing perforated 11.5 X 12.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Conclusion:

This is apparently a rather rare flaw. There is the possibility more may be found as this variety is not well known. If not hidden by the cancelation on a used stamp it is fairly easy to see. The cover I bought did not have the variety mentioned in the description but I was able to spot it easily. Keep your eyes open for one of these when you examine perforated 11.5 X 12 1-cent SQ's.

References:

CONSTANT PLATE VARIETIES OF THE CANADA SMALL QUEENS, Hans Reiche and Mike Sendbuehler, Third Revised Ed., Pub. Ian Kimmerly Limited, 1991.

Bill Burden's web page: http://www.wgburden.com/one_pages/1F16.1.html



Philatelic Phun with the Two Cents Small Queen

By John Hillson FRPSL FCPS

In the original proposals made by the newly formed British American Bank Co. Ltd in 1867 great play was made of the green ink for which a patent was held and that it was likely to cause faster wear on printing plates than other colours. As it turned out this was not the case but it did seem to bite a little deeper, because there is more evidence on this value of the remnants of guide lines, normally burnished off so as to be virtually entirely removed.

Most Two Cents Small Queens still in existence are from 2nd Ottawa printings so I have illustrated some of the phenomena to be found, starting with the bottom Latent Entry (not re-entry, please, the re-entry is the body of the stamp). If you look at Figure 1 there is the vestige of a guide line across the centre of the stamp, and immediately under it, the tips of the top of the stamp quite visible either side of the vignette (detailed images Figs. 1a and 1b). I was extraordinarily lucky to find this clearly printed specimen in a Glasgow stamp shop, the clarity of which enabled me to work out exactly how the variety came about and was subject of a subsequent article in *Maple Leaves* Aug 1985 #202 p.266(4). Two further examples of guide lines, one horizontal, the other vertical are shown in Figure 2, 2a, 2b.



Fig. 1

Latent Entry, Unitrade 36iv

Detail of Figure 1

Center Guide Line

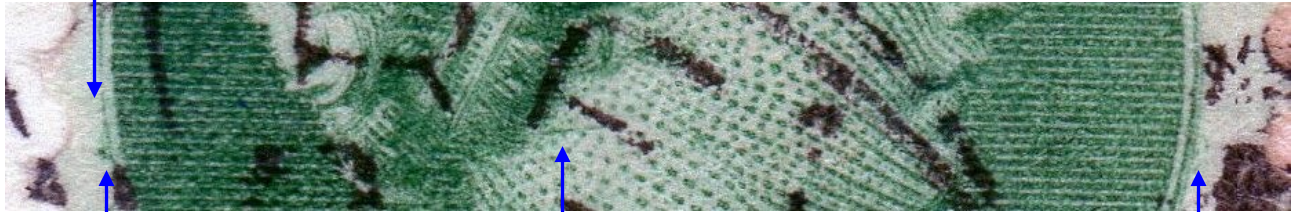


Fig. 1a

Upper left corner

Slightly arched line evidence of word tablet frame line above "A P" approximately

Upper right corner

Fig. 1b below



Multiple marks in lower margin especially below the right 2. There are also marks in the left 2 and the "E" of CENTS.



Horiz. Guide Line



Vert. Guide Line



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b

Fig. 2

Figure 3. shows four specimens; the left hand has a vertical guide line with guide dots (a), the 2nd a basal shift (b), the 3rd a basal shift and burnish scratches (which are worth looking for) (c), the fourth, burnish scratches and on its right side a burr rub (d). Figure 4 and 4a also shows these scratches but intriguingly one scratch can be seen in the lettering 'PO'.

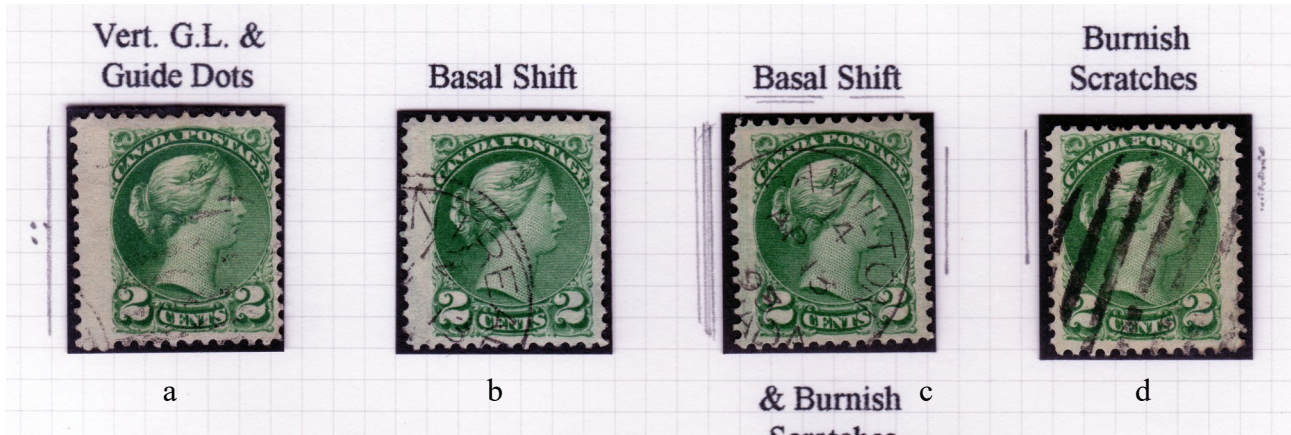


Fig. 3 above



Fig, 3a

Note the vertical guide line (arrow) running down the left side of stamp and guide dots (in circle) left center margin.



Fig. 3b

This stamp exhibits doubling all the way across the base of the design this is known as a Basal Shift.

There is also a vertical line in the upper left margin.



Fig. 3c

This stamp has a Basal Shift and Burnishing Scratches in the left, top, and right margins.



Fig. 3d

This stamp has Burnishing Scratches in left margin, and a Burr Rub in the right margin.



Fig 4



Fig. 4a

Note the scratches top and upper right and a scratch in the letters PO.

Figure 5 shows the well-known major re-entry with a distorted 'CENTS'. Figure 6 shows a base line re-entry and finally figure 7 is a less well-known major re-entry with doubling throughout the design and in particular the shading of the Queen's face and hair.



Fig. 5
Major Re-entry Unitrade 36vi



Fig. 6
Nice re-entry of the base line



Fig. 7

Major Re-entry with doubling throughout the design and in particular the shading of the Queen's face and hair.

References:

2017 UNITRADE SPECIALIZED CATALOGUE OF CANADIAN STAMPS, Ed. D. Robin Harris, The Unitrade Press, 2017.

Hurst's Major Re-entry on the 3-cents Small Queen

By Guy Jeffrey

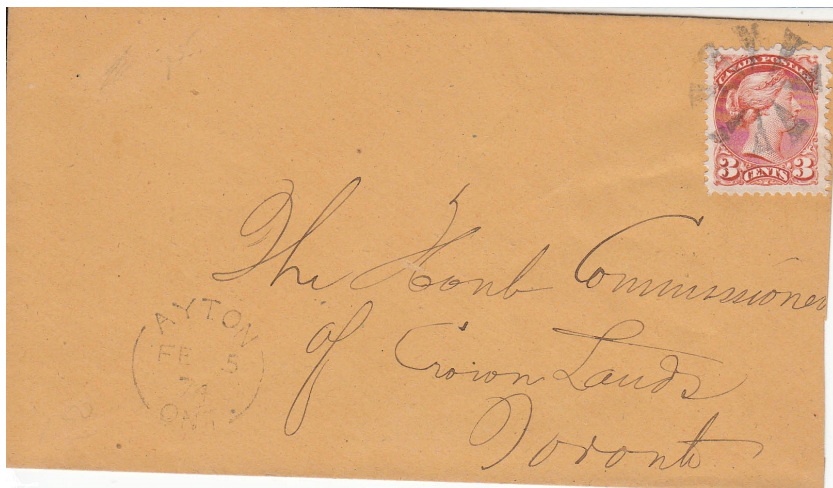


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

These are two examples of what might be Hurst's Major Re-entry. It is Bill Burden's 3R13.2 which is where I get the ID as Hurst's major. I am not sure that is a correct ID because there are several similar re-entries from that early printing. R&S figure 4-41 (Shoemaker's No. 7) is also very close. They may all be the same as R&S refers to a copy dated 17 Nov 1873 from Peterborough. It is a very good example of a copy dated 5 Feb 1874 (Figs. 1, 2). The upper stamp on the pair is another copy of the re-entry as well as a good example of Lacelle's 933, a star from Toronto dating from 1871 to 1875 (Fig. 3).

References:

Bill Burden's web page: http://www.wgburden.com/three_pages/Rentry/3R13.2.html

CONSTANT PLATE VARIETIES OF THE CANADA SMALL QUEENS, Hans Reiche and Mike Sendbuehler, Third Revised Ed., Pub. Ian Kimmerly Limited, 1991.

The Small Queen 6 cents, Plate Position 96

by Jim McCormick

I have written a number of hotly debated articles on plating the 6 cent issue. There is no debate that most of the 6 cents can be found with 1, 2 or 3 guide dots in the lower left corner, where the addition of a guide dot was the result of the re-entering of the plate position to the left. Exceptions are the left column of the sheet which show no guide dots, and the second column which did not gain a third guide dot. What remains controversial, is the number of plates which were used for printing these stamps.

Two theories are presented in Hillson & Nixon's book "Canada's Postage Stamps of the Small Queen Era, 1970-1987". One theory has a single plate responsible for all of the printings with guide dots in the lower left corner, and the alternate theory sites at least two plates for these printings.

With thanks to the efforts of several Small Queen collectors, I now have a large number of high resolution scans of blocks and strips for study from which I am working on plate reconstruction for the various states (whether 1 or more plates) for comparison

Here I present plate position 96 (bottom row, 6th stamp) from four different states of the plate (or states from two plates, if you prefer).

Figure 1 shows four stamps, each from multiples which clearly identify the stamps from position 96. In summary from left to right;

- 1-dot: From an early printing block/10 where each stamp shows a single guide dot. Note the unusual dot in the lower right corner, likely related to the imprint.
- 2-dot: Note how the guide dot remains in nearly exactly the same position as the first stamp, and the addition of a faint second guide dot tight against the LL corner. The imprint and guide dot in the bottom right corner are also present in identical positions compared to the first stamp. But the stamp design has a more coarse look to it, with heavy inking around CANADA POSTAGE and thickening of the middle of the left 6. There is also a faint plate scratch in the LL 6.
- 3-dot: This is from a strip/3 where the three guide dots for each stamp are a perfect match for positions 95-97 when comparing against the full sheet. Note how the two bottom left guide dots remain, and a third guide dot was added to the right of them. The dot in the LR corner no longer remains. And the whole stamp design has shifted slightly upwards. The scratch in the LL 6 is gone, although evidence of re-entry is visible in the middle of the same 6, and in the "O" in POSTAGE.
- 4-Final state: From the full sheet. Note how the three guide dots match the 3rd stamp, however the guide dots appear slightly lower again (because the stamp design shifted up again). The ink around CANADA POSTAGE is even heavier. The imprint in the bottom margin shows signs of wear, yet it remains in the identical position relative to the guide dots on the 1st and 2nd stamps.

Figure 1 - position 96 in four states from early to late printings



I suggest zooming in on the images to see the fine details, but I will provide full 1200 dpi scans of the multiples upon request.

It is possible that two plates were produced at the same time, using the same techniques to produce remarkable similarities for this plate position (rather than a progression as I suggest). But there are other remarkable similarities in many other areas of the plate when comparing 1-dot, 2-dot and 3-dot printings. In past articles I showed the transitions for positions 2 (dot-in-P) and 10 (twisted re-entry), and I intend to show the same for several other plate positions later this year. You be the judge!

As always, I am interested in seeing blow-up scans of any 6 cent multiples or re-entries. I would also be happy to work with someone on verification of the plate reconstruction project. I can be contacted at jim@jimmc.ca.

Happy Hunting!

A Letter to a Correspondent on the Small Queen 6c.

By John Hillson

Dear Correspondent,

I had hoped when I wrote the article in 'Dots & Scratches # 11 that it might produce some other examples perf 12 with single position dots to come to light. Incidentally 'Perf 12' could be + or - .01 I wouldn't argue with that, but what they will not be is 11.85, or 11.5 x 12. You dispute that one can assign stamps to a particular period because of their perforation measurements. Well I have been perfin these stamps since 1965; moreover because I am interested in the revenues, I wanted to know how closely the third Bill issue matched the Small Queens. Erling Van Dam was kind enough to loan me his entire stock of used common value 3rd Bills up to and including the 50c some years ago and I found the coincidence virtually identical. Used Bill stamps, unlike the majority of postage stamps, are dated. Thus the Large Queen period gauged 11.9, 1st Ottawa 11.85, early Montreal 11.5 x 12 and so on through out the entire 30 years. The only slight variation was the 11.75 x 12 I know on stamps only in 1877, while on Bill stamps they can be found 1887 and 1878. The table given in Ted Nixon and my book of perforations is dead accurate. I repeat, a stamp gauging 11.85 all round can only be 1st Ottawa whether you accept that or not. In Scotland there is a saying 'facts are chieils that wilna ding.' I do wish you would stop trying to 'ding' them.

Now I asked you a number of pertinent questions for you to answer, and to be frank, you either did not answer them, or missed the point of the question.

First I asked why the BABNC, commercial security printers would behave with the 6c in a way they did with no other value, large or small since the POD owned all the plates they paid for. What conceivable reason or commercial advantage to the firm was there? No answer. I then asked since the sole purpose of adding check letters to a plate, if there were only one plate why would the printer at some point add the letter 'A' to the 1871 plate. More waffle; I asked 'why' not 'when' was it allegedly added to the 1871 plate.. The reason the Montreal plate panes were designated 'B' & 'C' was because of the existence of the 'A' plate. NO other denomination where only a single pane, single plate existed was given a check letter; not the Half Cent or the Five Cents or the Twelve and Half Cents or the Fifteen Cents Large Queens, all in use during the Small Queen era, nor the Ten Cents, not even the first two Five Cent Small Queen plates. The answer is of course that no check letter was ever added to the 1871 Six Cents plate as will be shown – hopefully for the last time.

The third point was around the fact the printers knew they would need two each 2c and 6c plates to be able to meet the orders for both in good time. I pointed out that by mid 1872 two of each had been invoiced. You now come up with the theory that maybe the POD 'grudgingly' paid for the duff 'Ghostly Head' plate and it was that that was subject of the 2nd plate invoiced. Since in any contract it is implicit that goods supplied will be of merchantable quality, why would they do that? Only if they were persuaded that it had to be used as a temporary measure to meet demand while a replacement was made as quickly as possible. In which case examples of the 'ghostly head' would be found 1st Ottawa, not Montreal, and besides one still winds up with three plates, two 'of merchantable quality' and one duff.

You continue by suggesting that it would be illegal for the printers to hang on to a defective plate if it were not paid for. Why? As security printers they were subject to continual inspection. Of course they could keep it, and when an emergency did arise at the tail end of 1873 it was used, paid for or not. Ye Gods, the printers hung on to ALL the plates from mid 1897 till 1901, including four 8c plates of which only two had been paid for. I do not believe criminal proceedings were instituted then.

You doubt the existence of two dot stamps from the 1st Ottawa period, in particular the strip of 3 dated at Hamilton in 1875, because ‘stamps would not be not be kept in a drawer’ for such a length of time in such a busy office. Oh dear. To start with the strip gauges 11.85 all round, second when my colleague, Ted Nixon saw it he immediately dated it as an early 1873 printing, which to me meant that similar shade examples on cover indicated that time which means they would have been printed a little earlier – autumn/ winter of 1872-3. Next if it were a Montreal printing it would gauge 11½ x 12. How come late use? I think it was Firth in his book on the 15c who drew attention to the POD’s practise of putting new stock on top of old, and issuing from the top. The classic SQ 6c case is the Chocolate shade which is the original 2nd Ottawa shade – Ted Nixon has, or had, the earliest known date – but the bulk of dated chocolates are 1896/7 because they were buried by subsequent supplies of chestnuts and red-browns. This probably accounts for most Small Queen instances of late usage.

Now I turn to material differences between the two plates. I pointed out that the top imprint on the ‘A’ plate is parallel to the stamps, while that of the 1871 plate is at a slant, and suggested the use of a straight edge placed along those imprints if you did not believe me. You say you are puzzled by this phenomenon. You directed me to the so-called reconstructed sheet from the 1871 plate placed on top of the extant complete sheet from the ‘A’ plate. The disparity between the two top imprints is obvious and if you had the open mind you ask of me, it would be clear to you that these are two different plates. But you have done me a favour as I was not aware of the existence of either the base imprint block nor of the right side imprint block of four. Unfortunately the block of 10 base imprint block totally obscures that of the ‘A’ plate, but I have to say the 1872 looks much closer to the stamps than the ‘A’ plate’s base imprint. To determine if that is so the ‘A’ plate block would need to be revealed, But no matter; even more important is the side imprint. The top right 1871 block of 10 from the 1871 plate clearly shows the end stamps of Row 2 exactly below that in Row 1. What I did not know until I saw the (to me) new imprint block is whether or not all the stamps in the 10th vertical row were placed exactly one above the other. Now we all know they were. I pointed out for the umpteenth time that on the ‘A’ the stamp at the end of the second row is shifted to the right. Now if you look at the 10th row of the ‘A’ plate you can see why this is so – you may need a straight edge again – but if you place it along the left side of all the stamps from 2 – 10 in it you will see that they have been entered at an angle away from the 9th row, imperceptible at horizontal row 10, but gradually increasing the space between neighbours as one progresses toward the top of the sheet. Furthermore, placing a straight edge on the base of any of those nine stamps shows they are at a slight angle to their neighbours in the same horizontal row.

It looks like the siderographer did not notice what was happening until the plate was nearly complete, He effectively covered up the error by entering the top stamp in its correct position, so effectively indeed that I may be the first person to point out the anomaly. Surely to goodness you cannot continue to insist the 1871 plate and the ‘A’ plate are one and the same.

Now to the reconstruction. I have to say that to do this properly one has to have a good many overlapping pieces to be sure of its accuracy. What appears to have happened is that because there is a similarity in both plates in the guide dots, they must, ipso facto, be the same plate (and I was accused by a third person of inductive reasoning). Since the method of laying out plates, described in Ted and my book in Chapter two, followed a given pattern, it is not surprising similarities occurred. What is noticeable is that many of the dots on the 1871 plate were close to, or actually touched the stamps, on the ‘A’ plate they do not. If that were the result of re-entering slight shifting the stamp impressions upwards then the ‘A’ plate would abound in thickened base lines and/or base line re-entries. It does not. It is also unwise to assume that pieces with missing or no selvage are correctly placed.

I cannot understand the relevance of what happened to the word 'Postage' on the stamp R2/10 that you raised. The point I made, and which, again, you missed was that if the impression was not in its original position but had shifted, there would be evidence in the space between stamps 9 and 10, but there is none. The paper between the two stamps is a virginal as it was when it left the paper mill.

Finally, I have spent a lot of time on this particular argument and to be honest I am heartily tired of it.. Please do not waste your time by raising the subject with me again. Unless it is simply to admit that at long last you perceive the truth.

Yours sincerely,

John Hillson

6-cents Small Queen “Ghostly Head” A Theory of the Cause of the Rejected Plate

By Michael D. Smith



Ghostly Head

After studying the material shared by John Hillson and Jim McCormick on the production and plating of the 6-cent Small Queen issue I approached both parties with a theory concerning the reason for the weak printing of the stamps from this plate. John proposed this as being an early plate and that it was rejected and never finished properly. He did not know why. I got to thinking about why the printing was so light on the stamps. There was obviously a problem with inking, but not likely the ink being the culprit.

What else would cause poor inking? I thought about that for awhile. I knew the depth of the lines that held the ink in recess printing influenced the boldness of the print by the amount of ink they held. In the Ghostly Head printing all the printed lines in the stamp seem less bold than stamps printed from the other plates. I believe the reason for this is the steel for this plate may have been too hard to take a deep impression from the transfer roll as it was rocked against the plate. I feel that is why the printers never properly finished the plate and it was rejected.

I proposed this theory to John and Jim and got back the following replies:

John: “Your idea that maybe the steel was too hard in the second case could explain the siderographer’s difficulty and what I think was resultant damage to the side point so that when the ‘A’ plate was made, the side point was springing, resulting in two dots from the outset. There is an exact parallel with the 1859 12 1/2 c.”

Jim: “You have a decent theory for the ghostly head plate. I understand that it being “rejected” makes common sense, but I do not know how it can be stated as fact. According to John Hillson the records say two Small Queens 6 cent plates were invoiced in 1871. Was the second plate the ghostly head, or a separate 2-dot plate? Meanwhile, I will continue to accumulate any ghostly head copies I can find, and hope that one day we can discover new information.”

So both liked my theory and as always it presents more questions than answers.

Would anyone else like to share their comments?