

Newfoundland Stamps and Postal History

Part 1: Prior to 1910

The first of three articles by Professor Albert Hamilton on the postage stamps, and associated history, of the island of Newfoundland

The stamps of this most easterly Maritime Province of Canada are of interest to collectors and investors because of their increasing rarity, attractive designs, the historical significance of the airmail issues, and the fixed 90-year period of stamp production.

Newfoundland, with an area of approximately 42,000 square miles, is a considerable island, placing it 16th in the world, ahead of Ireland (20th), it is about 32 per cent larger than Ireland, and is almost exactly half the size of Great Britain (8th). Discovery, settlement and the commencement of administrative control can be linked to John Cabot, under charter to Henry VII of England, who landed at St John's, later to become Newfoundland's capital, in June 1497.

Letters from Newfoundland are known as early as the beginning of the 1700s. They would have been without any form of identification other than they emanated from Newfoundland. During this period letters across the Atlantic would have been handed to a ship's master or captain on a vessel bound for the country of destination; payment for carrying letters being made to the master or ship's agent. Up to three months, sometimes more, would not be unusual as a letter's transit time from St John's to London.

Simon Solomon was appointed the first postmaster in 1805; he introduced and made the first handstamps. These hand-

applied, pad-and-ink, stamps were of three types; circular 'pre-paid', straight-line 'St Johns, NFl'd', and double-ringed oval 'ship letter St Johns N'. An alternative was Simon Solomon's signature on the letter. In 1814 a ship letter fee to the British Isles was 6d. plus the Captain's gratuity of 2d. plus inland postage to place of destination; the amounts normally being paid by the addressee. This was a substantial cost and would have limited long-distance letter correspondence to that between business units, institutions, and by relatively wealthy individuals.

On the death of Simon in 1839, his son William Lemon Solomon was appointed postmaster in 1840. The island's post office was incorporated into the Imperial postal system in 1840 and the first circular datestamp was supplied from London on 20 June 1840.

The post office in St John's suffered the ignominy of being destroyed by fire on two occasions. Simon had combined his postmaster duties with his jewellery and watchmaker's business in a building that was burned down in 1817. Under William's charge, the post office, then in Water Street,

was one of a number of buildings destroyed in a city fire in 1846.

Prior to 1856 mail to the British Isles went by sailing ship to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to meet with mail-carrying transatlantic steamships. Between 1856 and 1889 mail either went direct from the port of St John's or via Halifax; from 1889 mail was normally direct from St John's. Mail to Canada and the United States was invariably sent by ship via Halifax until the opening of the island's railway system at the end of the 1890s. Internal mail was carried, prior to the inauguration of the railways, by couriers travelling between the island's relay stations and ships that coasted around the island.

Between 1 January 1857 and 24 June 1947 approximately 300 different postage stamps were released by the Newfoundland Post Office. These stamps were used until 1 April 1949 when they were replaced by the stamps of Canada.

The St John's Post Office was destroyed by fire on two occasions

A folded vellum letter written 4 January 1814 from Carbonear to London with Solomon's signature. To the right of the signature is the receiving port handstamp (Pool) Poole in Dorset



Adhesive postage stamps

There were seven different issues of stamps between the first issue in 1857 and 1900. The issues are known as:

Pence issues
First cents issue
Second cents issue
Roulette issue
Montreal printing
The Cabot issue
Royal family issue

Pence issues

The choice of designs by William Solomon for the first adhesive postage stamps, printed by Perkins, Bacon and Co Ltd in England, was an attempt to unite the descendants of English settlers with those of Irish and Scottish descent living on the island. In the mid-1840s the population of the island has been estimated to be about 100,000.

There were nine stamps with values between 1d. and 1s. The 1d. (sheets of 12x10) and 5d. (sheets of 8x5) have the royal crown in profile surrounded by heraldic flowers and emblems of the British Isles, rose, shamrock, and thistle. The 3d. (40 pairs) shows the rose, shamrock and thistle within a pyramidal setting of three joined circles. The 2d., 4d., 6d., 6½d., 8d. and 1s. (sheets of 5x4) contain a stylised rose and stem with an attached shamrock on one side and a thistle on the other.

There were three printings of these designs. The first, printed on thick white unwatermarked paper, was in January/February 1857. The second, in 1860, was on thin to medium paper, sometimes with a watermark of 'STACEY WISE 1858'. The third was in 1861, on similar paper to that of the previous year, and there were two groups. The first of these is referred to as the rose-lake shades (on soft paper) and the second as pale rose shades (on hard paper).

The 3d. green is Newfoundland's only triangular stamp
Cover to Baltimore, USA, via Halifax, with correct 1861 4d. rose-lake postage stamp

Roulette issue

Between 1876 and 1879 the 1c. lake-purple, Prince of Wales, 2c. bluish green, codfish, 3c. blue Queen Victoria and 5c. blue seal on ice floe stamps, of the second cents issue, was issued in rouletted rather than perforated form on medium white wove paper. The reason for rouletting was apparently to reduce production costs.

All stamps issued between 1865 and 1879, which were really one issue, were printed in 10x10 sheets by the American Bank Note Co of New York with the exception of the first 1c. printing which was supplied by the National Bank Note Co of New York. These stamps are commonly referred to as the New York Printings.

The postal rates were raised in August 1876 and included a 'foreign' category. The rates were 1c. local, 3c. inland, 5c. Canada, USA and Great Britain, 8c. British Empire, and 10c. foreign. On 1 January 1879 they were changed to 1c. local, 3c. inland, and 5c. for all other locations. The 1879 postal rates were retained for the next 14 years.



2c. bluish green, block of four showing roulette separation

13c. orange-yellow, top-sail schooner (reflective of Newfoundland's overseas trade) printed on stout white paper



During the period of the three printings (1857-61) the postal rates set by the Post Office in St John's were 3d. local, 3d. inland, 1s. Canada, 4d. USA, 6d. Great Britain and the British Empire. A registration fee of 6d. was introduced on 1 April 1858, irrespective of destination.

First cents issue

In July 1859 Canada passed legislation changing the currency to dollars and cents. Newfoundland eventually followed in adopting the decimal currency and

issued the First Cents issue of postage stamps in November 1865. The six stamps consist of 2c. codfish, 5c. seal on ice floe, 10c. Prince Albert, 12c. bust profile of Queen Victoria, 13c. top-sail schooner, and 24c. young Queen Victoria. These stamps were printed on yellowish or stout white paper.

The 2c. stamp was issued to pay for circular deliveries and printed matter. The 5c. value was used to pay for the inland letter rate. The 10c. value was for the letter rate to the United States. The 12c. stamp was for the most common rate to the British Isles and the 13c. was for letters from outposts on the island to mainland Canada, the Maritimes and the French administered islands of St Pierre and Miquelon, just south of Newfoundland. The 24c. stamp was issued to cover the double rate for letters to the British Isles.

Second cents issue

To cope with changes in postal rates and to replace certain values of the first cents issue with new colours, six stamps were issued between 1868 and 1873; these 'second cents' stamps were seen as an extension to the first cents issue. This issue comprised four releases: 1c. dull purple, portrait of Prince of Wales and 5c. black, seal on ice floe in November 1868, followed by a 3c. vermilion and 6c. rose, each with a portrait of Queen Victoria in July 1870, with a 1c. purple-brown in May 1871 and a 13c. blue of Queen Victoria in April 1873.

From 1865-71 the postal rates were 2c. local, 5c. inland, 13c. Canada, 10c. USA, 12c. Great Britain and, 10c. the British Empire; on 1 January 1873 the rates were significantly slashed to 1c., 3c., 6c., 6c., 6c., and 8c. respectively.





1896 reissue of 1c. deep intense brown, top marginal block of four with marginal imprint of British-American Bank Note Co Montreal

Montreal printing

In 1880 the American Bank Note Co, had established subsidiaries in Montreal and Ottawa to satisfy a requirement to have Newfoundland's stamps printed in the Empire. There were four printings in 1880, 1887, 1894 and 1896 by the subsidiary, the British-American Bank Note Co. The designs were the same as the previous roulette issue but with certain colour changes and additional values. The additions were a ½c. Newfoundland dog (rose in 1887, black in 1894 and orange-vermilion in 1896), 6c. Queen Victoria, from a photograph by Hughes and Mullen of Ryde, in 1869 (crimson, 1894), 10c. brigantine sailing ship (black), and 12c. bust profile of Queen Victoria, a design from the First Cents issue of 1865.

In 1890 the Ottawa subsidiary of B-ABNC printed a 3c. portrait of Queen Victoria on white wove, unwatermarked paper; there were three shades of slate and three shades of grey. This stamp was subsequently surcharged in 1897.

The John Cabot issue

A set of 14 stamps, 1c. to 60c., were recess-printed by the ABNC, New York, and issued on 24 June 1897 to commemorate the discovery of Newfoundland and Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Sourcing from an Empire supplier apparently no longer being a requirement. Daniel W Prowse, a local judge and historian, is credited with the concept for this issue and the designer

3c. grey with the 1897 ONE CENT surcharge, Type III, on horizontal pair



was R Ostrander Smith, who worked for ABNC in New York. This was Newfoundland's first commemorative issue. The stamps were printed on white wove paper that was not watermarked and the sheets were line perforated, perf 12. Each stamp has a printers' imprint, in miniature, below the design and a normal imprint in the lower margin. Plate proofs were printed on card in the issued colours.

In 1897 the 3c. stamp that had been printed by B-ABNC was surcharged 'ONE CENT' in black at the *Royal Gazette* offices, St John's with cancellation bars top and bottom through the '3's. By the end of September 1897 the 1c. stamp of the Cabot issue had been exhausted and post office stock of earlier 1c. stamps was low, necessitating the surcharge, pending the arrival of a new 1c. 400 sheets of 100 stamps were overprinted with a setting of 10x5, each sheet thus being subject to two printing runs. As the monthly demand for 1c. stamps was very high, the Post Office took the option of franking newspapers and circulars with a special handstamp 'PAID ALL' in a closed circle in black.

Royal family issue

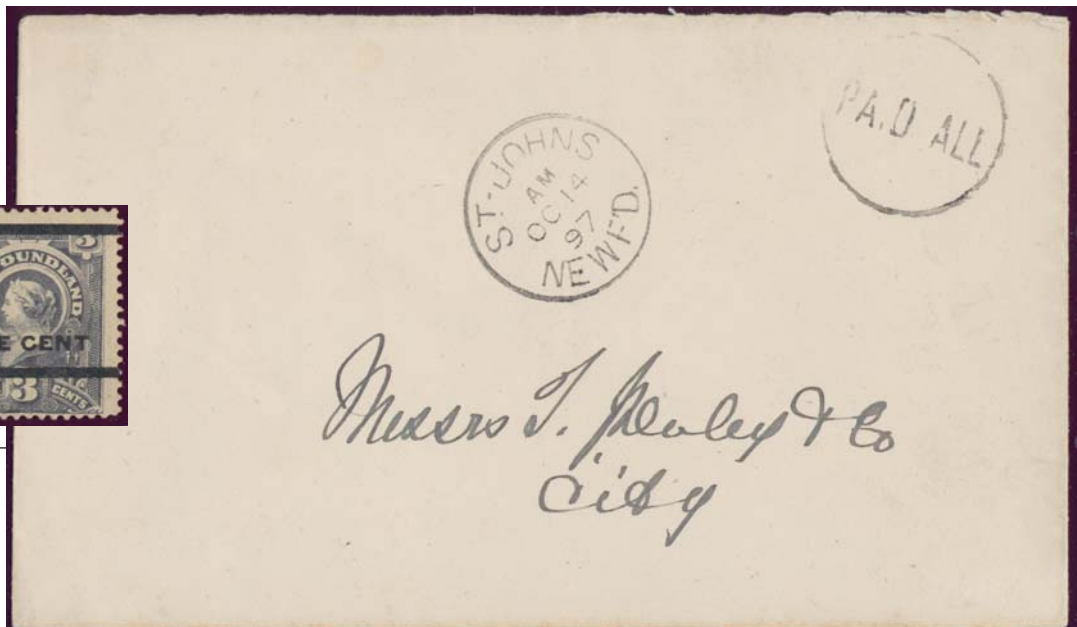
The Royal family issue, popularly referred to as the 'Royal Portraits', consisted of eight stamps and was issued to honour the 60-year reign of Queen Victoria. Values, subjects and issue date were as follows:

- ½c. olive Prince Edward August 1897
- 1c. carmine Queen Victoria August 1897
- 1c. blue-green Queen Victoria June 1898
- 2c. orange Prince of Wales August 1897
- 2c. scarlet Prince of Wales June 1898
- 3c. orange Princess of Wales June 1898
- 4c. violet Duchess of York October 1901
- 5c. blue Duke of York June 1899

All these stamps were printed by ABNC in New York on porous white paper line perf 12, with imprints the same as had been used for the Cabot issue. This was the first Newfoundland issue where plate numbers appeared in the margins of some values. The Royal family issue remained in use until 1918.

In 1900 the postal rates in use in Newfoundland were: local to St John's 1c.; within the rest of the island 3c.; mainland Canada 2c.; United States 5c.; Great Britain 2c.; British Empire 2c.; and Foreign 5c. Registration fees at that time were 3c., 3c., 5c., 5c., 4c., 5c., and 5c. respectively.

Stampless cover St John's OC 14 97 with PAID ALL, used during the 1c. stamp shortage just before the issue of the 3c. stamp with surcharge



In September 1908, during King Edward VII's reign, a single 2c. carmine stamp depicting a map of Newfoundland was issued. The apparent reason for this issue was the sinking of the SS *Sylvia* in April 1908, en-route from New York to Newfoundland and carrying consignments of the 2c. and the 5c. Royal Portrait issue. Cargo washed on-shore in Massachusetts included parcels containing the two stamps.

The issue of the 2c. carmine map stamp was probably an attempt to stop a loss of Post Office revenue, should the salvaged Royal Portrait stamps be clandestinely offered to the public for postal use. A quantity of six million copies of this stamp was produced on stout wove paper without watermark. E T Loizeaux designed and engraved the stamp, which was printed by Whitehead, Morris & Co Ltd of London in sheets of 100 (10x10).

In 1910 the only postal rate to change from the general postal rates of 1900 was the inland rate which dropped from 3c. to 2c.

To be continued

References

1. Lowe, Robson. *The Encyclopaedia of British Empire Postage Stamps 1639-1952: Vol V The Empire in North America.* Robson Lowe Ltd, London, 1973
2. Walsh, John M & Butt, John G. *Newfoundland Specialised Stamp Catalogue*; 5th edition. Walsh Philatelic Service, St John's, 2002

3c. orange, Princess of Wales (later Queen Alexandra), as vertical pair imperf between



2c. carmine, map of Newfoundland, with diagonal Specimen overprint and printer's security punched hole

