

The PEM . . . BINA Twins



ONE OF THE most fantastic stories in the world of philately had its beginning on November 2, 1858, in the little town of Pembina, North Dakota. The story began when a Canadian free fur trader arrived in this town to mail a letter, bearing an imperforate pair of the 7½d green Canadian stamps issued in 1857, and later to become very rare.

It is known today that this Canadian letter, mailed in the United States, contained complaints on the living conditions which the early Selkirk settlers had to endure in that far-away country which we know today as Manitoba.

In those days, the Hudson Bay Company was the undisputed ruler of the region. It enforced its authority by imposing a strict censorship on all the settlers' mail, in order that the London Government would not become aware of the adverse conditions.

Many years later, during the winter of 1906, a philatelist who was in urgent need of money, decided to sell his holdings which included the pair of Canadian stamps cancelled "PEMBINA." The owner, unconscious of the real value of the pair, washed it from the envelope, in which state it would have been of great importance today. Being rare stamps and of high value even at that time, the owner was unable to find a client who would purchase the pair. For this reason, he separated the pair with scissors to facilitate their sale. In 1906, one of these stamps bearing the "PEM" portion of the postmark, was sold at auction in London. The other stamp, bearing the "BINA" portion, was sold at auction in New York about the year 1921.

The stamp bearing the "BINA" portion became the property of Dr. Lewis Reford, the outstanding authority on Canadian stamps, and the "PEM" portion found its way into the hands of Col. J. S. O'Meara, another Canadian specialist and member of BNAPS before his death.

The eminent Canadian specialists were

great friends and often spent long hours together studying their stamps. One day in 1936, when Dr. Reford was making a meticulous examination of Col. O'Meara's stamps, he noticed the 7½d green with the "PEM" cancellation. This greatly intrigued him, as he knew he had one himself bearing the letters "BINA." To satisfy his curiosity, he placed his copy beside that of the Colonel and found that they lined up perfectly, establishing without a doubt that they had been an original pair. Both men being wealthy, a drawing was agreed upon to determine who would become the first owner of the re-united pair, a considerable sum of money which the loser would receive having been decided upon beforehand. The honor of ownership fell to Dr. Reford and the famous "PEMBINA" pair were re-united.

Dr. Reford had a friendly spot in his heart for his colleague, and upon his death willed the pair to Col. O'Meara. Following the death of Col. O'Meara, in 1952, the pair was purchased by Paul H. Dolbec, of Quebec City, who has since that time refused some very interesting offers for the renowned "PEMBINA" twins. ★ ★

Ross House To Re-open

On May 29, Western Canada's first post office re-opened as a post office and museum. It may be remembered that it was open last year in the summer months in the same capacities. Many tourists and Winnipeg citizens visited this interesting site in 1953, viewed its interesting historical contents and posted letters or cards with the special cachet which shows a picture of the House and gives details of its first opening in 1855.

All mail posted there this year will again receive the special cachet. Those desiring such covers may forward self-addressed envelopes in a cover addressed to the Postmaster, Winnipeg, marked Ross House. ★ ★