

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF THE FAMOUS STAMP TWINS "PEM & BINA"

One of the most fantastic stories in the world of philately had its beginning on November 2nd, 1858, in the little town of Pembina in North Dakota. The story began when a Canadian free fur trader arrived in this town to mail a letter, bearing an imperforate pair of 7½ penny 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. They enforced their 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 carrying the "BINA" portion became the property of Dr.

Lewis Reford, an outstanding authority on Canadian stamps, and the "PEM" portion found its way into the property of Colonel J. S. O'Meara, another Canadian specialist.

The eminent Canadian specialists, both members of the Royal Philatelic Society of London, 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 Colonel O'Meara Stamps, he noticed the 7½ penny 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 upon 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 Colonel O'Meara. Following the death of Colonel 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. The Quebec Philatelic Society just hope that this treasure will long stay in the walled city for the benefit of each member.

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