

A Note on Canada's 7 1/2 and 10 Pence Perforated by Yves Drolet

The following remark is found on Page 15 of *The Postage Stamps, Envelopes, Wrappers and Post Cards of the North American Colonies of Great Britain* published by the Philatelic Society, London in 1889: "The Seven Pence Halfpenny, green, and Ten Pence, blue, perforated, exist in the collection of a well-known Parisian collector. The authenticity, however, of the perforations appears to be doubtful." In his 1911 essay on Canadian postage stamps (pp. 72-73), Clifton Howes commented that the authenticity of these stamps "is more than doubtful, as it is practically certain that neither value was ever issued in this condition;" he subscribed to the view expressed by Charles Corwin and Donald King in the *Metropolitan Philatelist* in 1890: "We agree with the Society in doubting the authenticity of the 7½ d. and 10 pence, perforated, as these stamps, thus treated, have never been seen in America. [...] We have no hesitation in pronouncing them impostors."

Of course, it is now known that these two values were never issued perforated. The only perforated pence stamps are the ½d, 3d and 6d that were issued in December 1858-January 1859, only to be replaced with the *First Cents Issue* a few months later. This leaves us wondering about the provenance of the stamps held by a Parisian collector in 1889. A review of the early philatelic literature may shed some light on this.

A few isolated individuals started collecting stamps in the late 1850s, but in 1860, a wave of "stamp mania" swept through Europe, with children feverishly exchanging stamps in schoolyards, and adults from all backgrounds following suit in public squares. Almost immediately, a flurry of forged and bogus stamps appeared on the market to meet this new demand, prompting the early philatelists to try to distinguish between genuine and fake stamps. One of them was Oscar Berger-Levrault, a printer from Strasburg, France, who drafted and circulated handwritten lists of all the stamps he was aware of in September 1861. Interestingly, these lists included Canada's 7½d and 10d in both imperforate and perforate conditions! These stamps are also listed in the first printed postage stamp catalog published by Alfred Potiquet in Paris in December 1861, in the catalog published in German by Berger-Levrault in 1864, and in the catalog published in Germany by Gustav Bauschke in 1865. However, the ½d, 3d and 6d are the only Canadian pence stamps listed as perforated in the catalog published by Pierre Mahé in Paris in 1865, and the 7½d and 10d perforated were removed from the 1867 edition of Berger-Levrault catalog.

For what it is worth, we may conclude that one or several copies of the 7½d and 10d were privately perforated, probably in Paris, at some point between January 1859, when the perforated Pence Issues were issued by the Canada Post Office, and September 1861, when Oscar Berger-Levrault's first catalog listing was published. They were unmasked as fraudulent in 1865-67. This would probably make them the earliest Canadian stamps tampered with in order to create philatelic rarities. One is left wondering what became of the stamps recorded in Paris in 1889.