

The 1868 Two Cents Large Queen

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE



Figure 1: The basic eight stamps of the Large Queens issue.

Figure 2: The only recorded copy in private hands of the black 2¢/3¢ tête-beche composite die proof. Another copy is in the Canadian Postal Archives.



Figure 3: A block of four from an original block of 17 broken down after the Nov. 17, 1971, Firth sale.



E. & G. BOTHWELL
CLUTHA MILLS

Figure 4: The E. & G. Bothwell Clutha Mills watermark. It is seen in a reversed position when viewed from the back of the stamps.



Figure 5: The unique block of 18 stamps bearing the full Bothwell watermark.

Figure 6: The finest of the two known copies of the 2¢ Large Queen on horizontally laid paper.

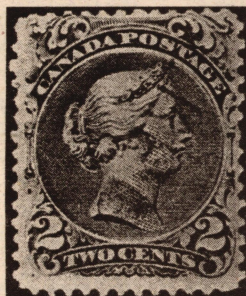


Figure 7: The other copy of the 2¢ Large Queen on horizontally laid paper.



Figure 8: A promissory note showing the only recorded use as a revenue of a 2¢ Large Queen on Bothwell watermarked paper.

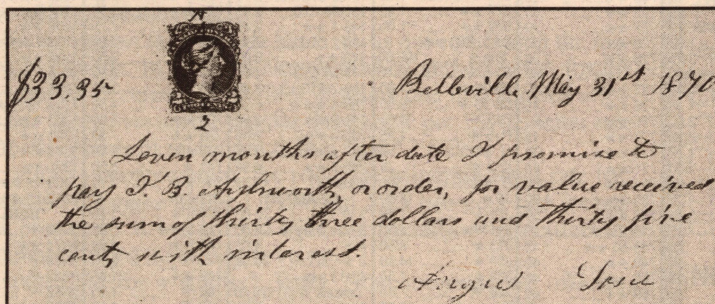


Figure 9: A 2¢ Large Queen paying the registration fee for a domestic letter not weighing above 1/2 ounce.



With the creation of the Dominion of Canada on July 1, 1867, a new postal organization was required. On April 1, 1868, the post offices of Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were amalgamated, new rates set and new stamps issued (Canada Scott 21-33).

The 15¢ Canada Scott 29 was put on sale, Feb. 22, 1868, because the 15¢ British packet rate via the United States had come into effect on January 15 of that year.

The government wanted the new stamps printed in Canada (Figure 1). Provincial stamps had previously been printed in New York by the American Bank Note Co. and its predecessor, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson.

A 10 year renewable contract was given to the British American Bank Note Co. (BABN) of Ottawa. In fact, it lasted for 29 years (1868-97) and during that period the stamps were printed in Ottawa (1868-74 and 1888-97) and Montreal (1874-88).

Some of the Large Queen values were replaced as early as 1870 by the Small Queens. Even though the period of use of the Large Queens was short, except for the 15¢ which was never replaced, a number of printings exist. There are 10 or more paper varieties, including the Bothwell and Pirie watermarked papers. The Pirie watermarked paper was used only for the early printings of the 15¢. As well, different gauge perforation wheels were used at different times; however, the 2¢ is only found perf. 12.

The green 2¢ Large Queen (Canada Scott 24) is probably the most interesting of the issue, if not of all Canada, because there are so many unusual items and interesting rates for this stamp. The 2¢ on laid paper, the 2¢ block of 18 showing the full Bothwell watermark, the 2¢ adjoining town rate and the 2¢/3¢ tête-beche composite die proof are just some of the examples of the uniqueness of the 2¢ value.

Many of the items illustrating this article have been displayed in some of the world's most celebrated Large Queens collections and many are illustrated in the definitive literature of the issue. They are shown here courtesy of The Brigham Collection, except for Figure 7, which is from a research paper prepared by John Jamieson of Saskatoon Stamp Centre, and Figure 13, which is reproduced from the October 1971, *Maple Leaves*.

Many essays, die proofs and plate proofs for this issue have been seen in collections for decades. Recently, a number of formerly unknown items have appeared on the market as a result of material from the BABN coming up for sale or material sold by descendants of the partners of the BABN; e.g., die proofs on India paper of the 2¢ have been known for years, a few months ago die proofs on wove paper appeared at auction.

Another example is the 2¢/3¢ tête-beche composite die proof (Figure 2). Up to the fall of 1997, the black example of this composite die proof, in The Brigham Collection, was the only known copy of this proof. On Oct. 10, 1997, some of the archives of the BABN came up for sale at Spink in New York. Among the items offered was another 2¢/3¢ tête-beche composite die proof. Most of the BABN items in the Spink sale were never sold because they were claimed as property of the government of Canada by Canada Post Corporation. They were subsequently turned over by the post office to the Canadian Postal Archives where they, including the new 2¢/3¢ tête-beche composite die proof, are now housed for posterity.

Multiples of any Large Queen stamps are rare, particularly since large multiples tend to be broken down by dealers and collectors who seek to make the most financial gain from their investments. The 2¢ is no exception to the rule. After the Firth sale of Large Queens a block of 17 was broken down into several pieces including the block of 4 in Figure 3. Although replaced in 1872, four years after its issue, by the 2¢ Small Queen, there were enough printings of the 2¢ Large Queen to identify at least seven shades of green: green itself, deep green, light emerald and emerald green, blue green and light and deep blue green.

There are a number of varieties of this stamp including a major re-entry in "ANADA POS" in position 7 of the sheet and a couple of cracked plate varieties, including a curved line in front of the Queen's nose and one where a line crosses the frame in front of the Queen's nose.

One of the most spectacular pieces of this value is the "block of 18" on the "E. & G. Bothwell Clutha Mills" watermarked paper (Figure 4). It has been in the hands of many of the greatest collectors of Canada and was once offered by British dealer Frank Godden to King George V for The Royal Collection.

The Bothwell paper was made by Sommerville, Whyte and Company and the watermark is an artificial composite of initials and words relevant to the printing firm. The "E" is for Edinburgh and the "G" is for Glasgow, two cities related to the firms through the word Bothwell. Bothwell is a street in Edinburgh where the company had a factory called Bothwell Works.

The Glasgow relationship comes from the firm's use of the trademark Bothwell Castle, after a castle in Hamilton near Glasgow. Clutha is the Lowland Scots name for the river Clyde. This unique block (positions 81-89 and 91-99 of the sheet of 100 stamps), showing the full Bothwell watermark, is the most important mint multiple in Canadian philately (Figure 5). The left pair has been moved back to its proper location in November 1996. It had been attached at the right end in the past in error and was so attached when offered in auction sales and illustrated in philatelic literature. The error of placement of the pair (positions 81 and 91) had been identified by Horace W. Harrison prior to 1972 while the block was in the L. Gerald Firth collection.

The rarest Canadian stamp is the 2¢ on horizontally laid paper (Canada Scott 32). Only two copies exist. The finest copy (Figure 6) was acquired by Ferrary prior to 1924 and has been in the Reford (circa 1935-50), "Bayfield" (1993-98) and Brigham Collection (since 1998). From 1950 to 1993 it was owned by Winnipeg dealer Kasimir Bileski. This copy has been displayed at both CAPEX '78 and CAPEX '96. It was also shown in Ottawa in 1993 at the convention of The Royal Philatelic Society of Canada.

The second copy (Figure 7) was found by London, England dealer, J. W. Westrop prior



Figure 10: A valid, but illegal, use of a bisected 2c to pay the drop letter rate in Halifax. Drop letters had no weight limit.

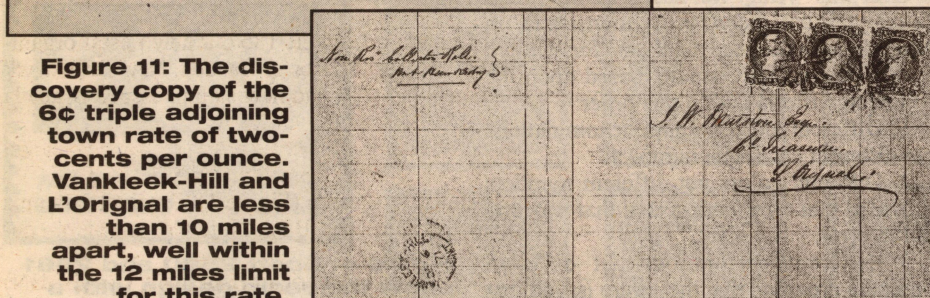


Figure 11: The discovery copy of the 6c triple adjoining town rate of two-cents per ounce. Vankleek-Hill and L'Original are less than 10 miles apart, well within the 12 miles limit for this rate.



Figure 12: The only recorded Large Queen registered adjoining rate. Fergus is just under 12 miles from Guelph.

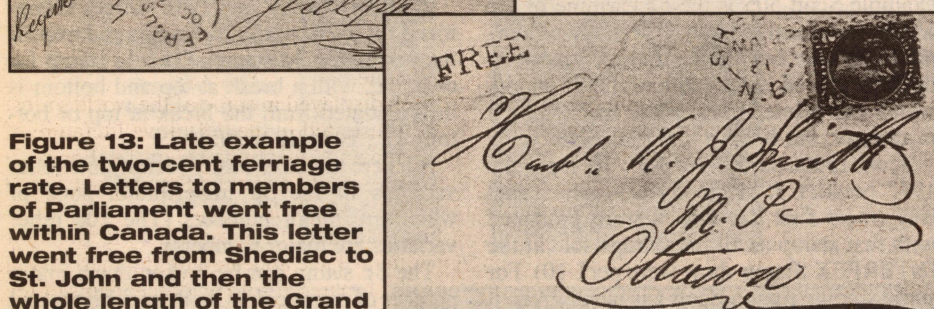


Figure 13: Late example of the two-cent ferriage rate. Letters of Parliament went free within Canada. This letter went free from Shediak to St. John and then the whole length of the Grand Trunk Railway (Portland, Maine, to Ottawa). The only part of the trip not entitled to free franking was the distance between St. John and Portland on the international steamer. The two-cent ferriage rate was applicable and affixed at Shediak because the rate had to be prepaid.

to 1935. It was in the collection of L. Gerald Firth, a prominent Large Queen collector from 1935 to 1971. From 1971 to 1986 it was held by a number of collectors including Duane Hillmer and Victor Krievins. Since 1986 it has been in the hands of a syndicate.

There are three or four known promissory notes bearing a Large Queen used as a revenue. A tax on promissory notes, drafts and bills of exchange came into effect on Aug. 1, 1864, and special "Bill" stamps were issued for this purpose. When "Bill" stamps were not readily at hand ordinary postage stamps were used. One of these uses is unique (Figure 8) since it bears the only known use of a Bothwell watermarked stamp as a revenue.

The main uses for the 2c were to pay the domestic two-cent registration fee in effect until May 8, 1889 (Figure 9), the two-cent double printed matter and double circular rates to North America, the two-cents circular rate per ounce to the United Kingdom, the two-cent transient newspaper rate and as a make-up with the one cent to pay the three-cent domestic letter rate.

In addition to these uses, there are some unique rates for this stamp. Figure 10 shows a 2c diagonal bisect paying the one-cent drop letter rate (in effect from July 1, 1859 to July 15, 1873).

The use of bisects was not legal in Canada, although they were accepted prior to confederation in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Postmasters from those two provinces accepted this usage for several years after Confederation.

The two-cent adjoining town rate was an unusual rate since it was not codified in the regulations but common practice in Canada. In fact, the first published authorization for the two-cent adjoining town rate was not circulated until 1889. It was a rate that allowed a letter to be mailed for two cents per 1/2 oz. versus the regular three cents per 1/2 oz. letter rate when the distance between the two points of mailing was less than 12 miles.

In the Maritime provinces, prior to confederation, the two-cent adjoining town rate had been defined as the county rate. As the name implied it allowed for a two-cent rate for any town within a county in these provinces. It was carried over, unofficially, after confederation. Figure 11 and 12 are examples of the adjoining town rate.

Another unusual two-cent rate paid for a soldier's letter. Noncommissioned officers, embodied pensioners, seamen, soldiers and army schoolmasters were allowed to send or receive letters for two cents as long as they were properly endorsed and countersigned by their officers and did not exceed 1/2 ounce in weight.

A rare usage was that of the two-cent rate between frontier offices on the New Brunswick-United States border. The New Brunswick towns, which probably took advantage of this arrangement, with their Maine adjoining towns in brackets, were St. Andrews (Robbinston), St. Stephen (Calais) and Woodstock (Houlton).

The most obscure, and one of the rarest, usages for the two cents was the ferriage rate, in part because it was never authorized by an act of Parliament and never published. It resulted from an 1851 agreement between the Postmasters General of Canada and the United States and was to provide a uniform rate of two cents between border towns mostly separated by a ferry ride. Since the agreement appears to have ended in the very early 1870s it is not surprising that Large Queen ferriage covers are exceedingly rare (Figure 13).

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