

1920 Newfoundland stamp crisis led to interesting surcharges

For centuries, Newfoundland was plagued by irregular steamship service between itself and England. In 1920, there was additional pressure of work on Messrs. Whitehead, Morris & Co. Ltd. of London, England — Newfoundland's stamp printers

were mailed for free.

The Post Office Department estimated that 5 million of these types of items passed through the mails every year.

The local letter rate was 2¢, and that value also was in great demand fiscally to pay the tax on receipts,

isolated coastal communities) were sent with cash payments to St. John's and stamped on arrival in green with the three-line marking "Postage Paid/G.P.O./St. John's, N.F."

By Sept. 6, the 1919 original printings of the Caribou stamp series (Scott 115-26) were virtually depleted. The POD was able to mitigate the shortage of high values by returning to post offices the 6¢ to 60¢ stock remainders of the Cabot series (Scott 61-74) originally issued June 24, 1897.

However, there were no Cabot low values, and few Caribou ones, in the POD vaults. As of Sept. 6, 1920, there were 800,000 1¢ and no 2¢ stamps on hand. The few 3¢ stamps in post offices were reserved for foreign postage, and those were gone by Sept. 8.

As a consequence, the POD proceeded with sur-

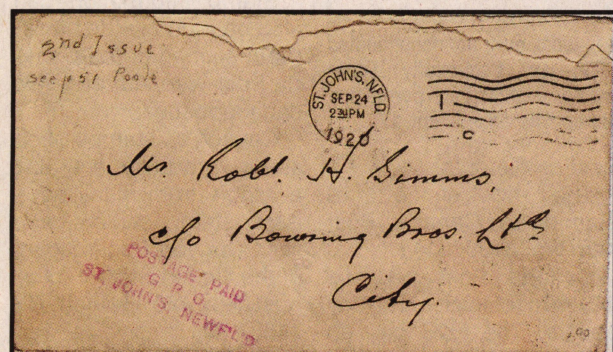


Figure 1. With a shortage of low-value stamps, as of Sept. 4, 1920, Newfoundland mailers paid in cash and letters were stamped as shown in the lower-left corner of this cover.

— slowing production of Newfoundland issues.

These two factors combined to contribute to a local shortage of stamps.

Beginning in January 1920, requisitions for stamps from the printers were curtailed, and from time to time throughout the year, small amounts of stamps sufficient only for a two weeks' supply were sent to Newfoundland.

At the time, the 1¢ value paid the rate up to two ounces for circulars and newspapers leaving the Dominion of Canada. Books, newspapers and magazines distributed by mail in the dominion were charged at 2¢ per pound; those under four ounces

checks, notes, bills of lading and other types of receipts.

The 3¢ stamps paid the up-to-one-ounce letter rate to all parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The 3¢ stamps also paid the letter rate to Great Britain, anywhere in the British Empire and to the United States — and 3¢ also was the registration fee until July 15, 1920, when it was raised to 5¢.

The POD estimated that it processed 400,000 local, internal and international letters each month, and that some 300,000 3¢ stamps were needed per month to keep up with this level of service.

To cope with the shortage of low-value stamps, the POD's first instructions were that, as of Sept. 4, 1920, local (2¢) and domestic (3¢) letters were to be paid for in cash, rubberstamped in carmine with the three-line marking "Postage Paid/G.P.O./St. John's, Newf'd," and then postmarked as usual. A cover with this marking is shown in Figure 1.

Letters from other towns and the outports (small,



Figure 3. At top, the Type I overprint of the 3¢-on-15¢ issue of 1920 (Scott 128). On the Type II variety at bottom (129), the lower bar is farther from the top bar to better obliterate the lower value inscribed on the stamp.

charging some of the high values of the Cabot series (Scott 127-130) to become lower values.

The first trial surcharge, in a setting of 25 units (five by five), read "THREE CENTS" in two lines of Roman capitals between two long horizontal bars. The



Figure 4. The 6¢ Logging stamp of the Cabot series was the only 6¢ available for franking foreign mail, so Cabot high values were surcharged, such as the 35¢ red Iceberg Off St. John's stamp.

The surcharge was tried out in both black and red inks to see which color would give the best results. One sheet of each color was printed; they are considered essays. They were sold at face value to a resident of St. John's in October 1921 and were later offered for sale in the United States.

Since the 6¢ Cabot was then the only 6¢ stamp available for franking foreign mail, the POD decided to reserve that remaining stock and instead surcharge other high values of the Cabot issue.

The 3¢ black surcharge was applied to 500 sheets (50,000 stamps) of the 15¢ Seals issue (Scott 70) from the Cabot series.

The sheets were broken down in blocks of 25 to accommodate the surcharge setting. After 3,000 stamps were printed, the vertical distance between the horizontal bars of the surcharge was reset at 13.5 mm (Type II, Scott 129) rather than the original 10.5 mm (Type I, 128) to more effectively cancel the value numerals.

The two types are shown in Figure 3.

They were issued on Saturday, Sept. 11, through a St. John's stationer, and at the General Post Office on Sept. 13.

The same wide-bar



Figure 5. Paying the local letter rate and fiscal usages, 2¢ stamps were urgently needed. The 30¢ Colony Seal issue became a 2¢ stamp after surcharging.

black surcharge was applied to 500 sheets (50,000 stamps) of the 35¢ Iceberg Off St. John's stamp (Scott 73) from the Cabot series, and the stamps were issued Sept. 14 (130, Figure 4).

A 2¢ black surcharge was applied to the 500 sheets (50,000 stamps) of the 30¢ Colony Seal issue (Scott 72) of the Cabot series.

As this stamp was vertical, the surcharge setting of 25 (five by five) was

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Figure 6. Varieties exist for all the 1920 surcharges. Only 50 examples are recorded of the inverted 2¢ on 30¢ (top). The 3¢-on-15¢ also exists with inverted surcharge (bottom).



Figure 2. With the last 3¢ stamps depleted, high values of the 1897 Cabot series were revalued to 3¢ with a surcharge. This example overprinted 3¢-on-6¢ in black is considered an essay.

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changed to read "TWO CENTS" in two lines of Roman capitals with a horizontal bar at the top only.

Unlike the 3¢ surcharge, the 2¢ surcharge bar was continuous across the setting, measuring 106 mm, as seen in Figure 5.

The 2¢ surcharge was put on sale Sept. 24. A single sheet of 25 is known with a red trial surcharge.

Varieties exist for all surcharges. Fifty copies of the 2¢-on-30¢ are recorded with an inverted surcharge (Scott 127a, pictured at top in Figure 6). This stamp



Figure 7. The known varieties of the 1920 surcharges include the lower bar of the overprint completely or partially missing.

also exists with a seriously misplaced surcharge (one sheet of 25) and, in pairs, with one stamp without surcharge (127iii in the *Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps*).

Normally, the "O" of "TWO" is printed above the "T" of "CENTS," but in positions 2, 7, 12 and 17 of the surcharge setting it is found over the "S."

The 3¢-on-15¢ (Type I) is known with an inverted surcharge (Scott 128a, at bottom in Figure 6) as is the 3¢-on-35¢ (130b). The existence of the latter va-



Figure 8. Despite being known as the "THREE-omitted" variety, the "THREE" is never completely absent on this surcharge variant.

riety has been questioned by some experts.

In addition, the same stamp can be found with the lower bar missing or partially missing (Scott 130a, Figure 7) and as what is called the "THREE-

omitted" variety (*Unitrade* 130ii). However, the "THREE" is never completely missing (Figure 8).

Finally, this stamp is also recorded with a raised second "E" in the word

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cross overprints; same 2p, 3p, 4p, 9p with additional overprint in margin; same 12p with invert overprint; 1943 12 value Wright Bros. overprints; 1950 8 value airmails, etc., etc., etc. Also note the 1953 4 value Coronation set with reversed color overprints on a first day cover. There are many other errors, varieties & reprints (all noted). Included are 70 commercial covers, some first day covers and some postal cards. Extremely well organized collection that is virtually impossible to duplicate. If you are looking for a new area to collect or want to expand a current collection, this one is for you.....**NET \$1,995.00**

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O CANADA

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"THREE" (Unitrade 130iii). The "raised-E" variety is the only one known on the Type II of the 3¢ on 35¢ stamp (Unitrade 129i)

On Sept. 25, the SS *Sachem* arrived with 800,000 3¢ stamps, and the 3¢-on-35¢ stamp was withdrawn. Four days later, the SS *Digby* brought 300,000 1¢ and 500,000 2¢ stamps.

On Oct. 4, the 2¢-on-30¢ surcharge was withdrawn and rubberstamping of cash letters was

stopped.

The remainders were made available through the philatelic service to fulfill orders for the stamps received through the post.

Most of the illustrations in this article are provided courtesy of D. Robin Harris, editor of the *Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps*, who obtained them from Eastern Auctions.

The illustrations in Figures 3, 4 and 5 are shown courtesy of Canadian Postal Archives. ■

St. Louis Stamp Expo prospectus available

The exhibitor's prospectus is available for St. Louis Stamp Expo 2013.

The stamp exhibition and bourse will take place March 22-24, 2013, at the St. Louis Renaissance Airport Hotel in St. Louis, Mo.

The St. Louis Stamp Expo is an American Philatelic Society World Series of Philately exhibition. The exhibitor winning the grand award will be invited to participate in the Champion of Champions competition at APS Stampshow, taking place at Frontier Airlines Center in Milwaukee, Wis., Aug. 8-11, 2013.

St. Louis Stamp Expo will include a court of honor exhibition, 50 dealers in the bourse, stamp-hobby speakers, a youth area, and a public auction conducted by Regency-Superior Auctions.

The expo will also host the annual meetings of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society and the Auxiliary Markings Club.

To obtain an exhibitor's prospectus, visit the web site www.stlouisstampexpo.org, or write to St. Louis Stamp Expo, Box 8277, St. Louis, MO 63156.

The deadline for exhibition entries is Dec. 31. ■

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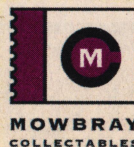
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