

# A Prince Edward Island Primer

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

I wrote about the stamps of New Brunswick in the April 2000 *Scott Stamp Monthly*, and in that article I suggested that, in my view, a collectors' pecking order exists for British North America.

After Canada, the provinces and colonies that compose BNA are, in order of collecting preference, Newfoundland, British Columbia and Vancouver Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

Why does PEI come last? I believe it is sim-

ply due to the lack of material, the poor quality of the stamps and the meager state of the remaining covers from the colonial period.

Furthermore, there are numerous forgeries and many dubious items of postal history.

Until 1987, there was also a virtual lack of philatelic literature on the subject. That year, James C. Lehr's book, *The Postage Stamps and Cancellations of Prince Edward Island, 1814-1873*, was published.

As the first in-depth look at PEI philately,

the book suffers now as most such first attempts do. It states quite well the reality of collecting PEI for the time it was written, but it contains much information that has since been superseded. However, nothing as comprehensive has been issued since.

Two other books of use have been published in the meantime, but neither deals with the stamps or the postal history of PEI. G. Douglas Murray is the author of both. *The Post Office on Prince Edward Island (1787-1990)* was published in 1990, and is more a listing of post offices and their dates of existence than anything else. In 1995, *2000 Postmarks of Prince Edward Island, 1814-1995*, made its appearance. This is a very thorough study of the postmarks and cancellations of the island.

Most of the illustrations accompanying this article show items auctioned Feb. 20, 1999, by the U.S. firm Charles G. Firby of Waterford, Mich.

Like all BNA colonies, Prince Edward

Island issued stamps in both sterling and decimal currencies.

Contrary to Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, each of which switched from one to the other in 1859, PEI did not attempt decimal currency reform until January 1872. This was just a year-and-a-half before it joined the Canadian Confederation and stopped production of its own stamps.

The *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* lists 16 stamps for PEI; all bear the likeness of Queen Victoria.

Most of the stamps are profile cameos created mainly in light pastel colors, as demonstrated by the 2-penny dull rose issue of 1861, Scott 1, shown in Figure 1 as a block of 15.

The only exception to this pattern is a 3d sterling (4½d local currency) stamp, Scott 10, issued June 1, 1870. As shown in Figure 2, it uses as its vignette (or central design) the design by Chalon of the head of the queen.

The reason behind this exception was that

Figure 1: Prince Edward Island's 2-penny dull rose issue of 1861, Scott 1, in the largest recorded perf 9 multiple; ex-Dale-Lichtenstein.

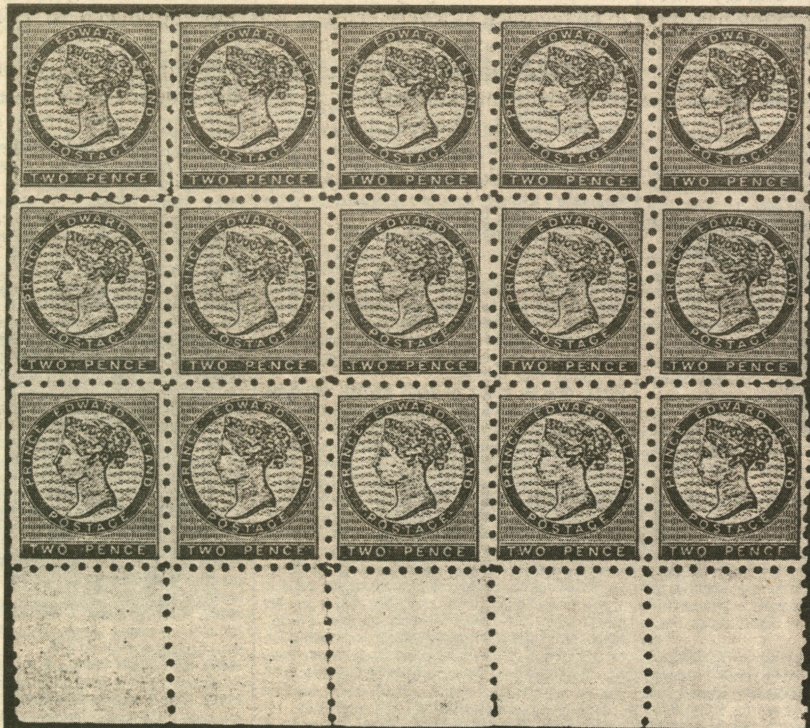
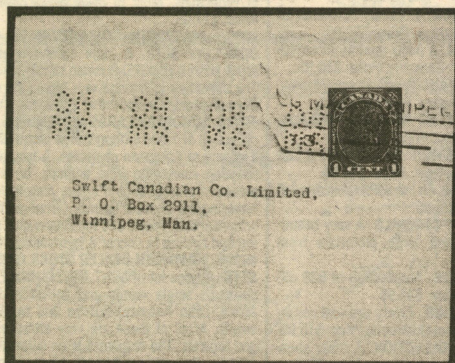


Figure 2: Of the 18 stamps issued by Prince Edward Island, only the 4½d brown of 1870 shows the Chalon portrait of Queen Victoria.

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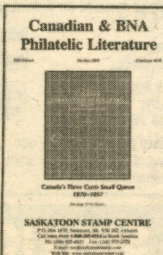
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the PEI government was under pressure to produce a stamp of this denomination because of a rate change. It contracted with British American Bank Note, the Ottawa printer of Canadian stamps, to produce what is now considered the most beautiful PEI stamp.

A 6d essay using the Chalon portrait was also produced, as shown in Figure 3, but the stamp was never issued. Charles Whiting of London, England, printed all other PEI stamps.

The first issue, comprising three values — 2d, 3d and 6d — was released July 1, 1861. The stamps were perforated gauge 9 and printed on yellowish paper. Rouletted versions of the 2d stamp, as shown in Figure 4, are



Figure 3: The essay for a 6d Chalon head stamp that was never issued.

known, as are bisected uses of the 2d and 3d (shown in Figure 5).

The second set, consisting of 1d, 2d, 3d, 4d, 4½d, 6d and 9d stamps, was issued between 1862 and 1870. The stamps are perforated gauge 11½x12 and can be found on white or yellowish paper.

There are many more varieties in this set including bisects, shades, compound perfs, vertically imperforate between and imperforate margin copies. An example of the latter is shown in Figure 6.

The 9d stamp comes in a perf 11 version.

There is a "TWC" for "TWO" error in the 2d rose in position 54, and a "FOUP" instead of "FOUR" in the 4d black, but the position of the latter is not known.

The decimal series was introduced Jan. 1, 1872, and consists stamps with values of 1¢, 2¢, 3¢, 4¢, 6¢ and 12¢.

For a series with a very short usage period, it is replete with shades and varieties, particularly imperforate margins, and again there are some bisect uses.

Perforations vary. One can find 11½x12, 12½x13 and 12x12 examples of all



Figure 4: There are five known examples of this rouletted 2d stamp of 1861. Three are in private hands, one is in the Royal Collection and one is in the Tapling Collection at the British Library. This example is on piece.



Figure 6: A 3d strip of five from the 1862-70 set, with imperforate bottom margin.

the values except the 4¢ and 12¢, which come only as perf 12. Reprint plate proofs exist in black for some of the sterling and decimal values.

A year after PEI joined the Dominion of Canada July 1, 1873, the provincial government sold the remainders of the PEI colonial stamps — with a face value of more than \$90,000 — to Donald King for \$1,100.

What is amazing about the sale is that the stamps were never demonetized, so King could have used them as postage.

He wrote a seminal article on the subject of PEI stamps in the April 30, 1895, issue of Stanley Gibbons' *Monthly Stamp Journal*. King has come to be regarded as a very enterprising stamp dealer who, after leaving the Post Office in Halifax, traded under his daughter's name, Emily King. Corner cards bearing this name are still found in many stamp dealers' boxes.

PEI philately is full of fakes, counterfeits,

forges, reprints and bogus stamps. The colony only issued 16 face-different stamps over a very limited 12-year period. Even owners of great collections, such as Lichtenstein, doubted the authenticity of many of their PEI items. Forgeries or counterfeits are known for the 2d, 3d, 4d, 4½d and 6d of the sterling issues, and the 1¢, 2¢, 3¢ and 4¢ of the decimal series.

Samuel Allan Taylor is credited with having created bogus 10¢ and 15¢ PEI stamps. Another bogus stamp, first reported in 1866 but of unknown origin, shows a ship design with a 10¢ value. Not only did PEI never use anything but the monarch on its stamps, but the decimal currency shown on the stamp was not introduced to PEI until six years later.

Prince Edward Island may fall last in the pecking order of BNA issues, but I hope this preliminary glimpse has revealed that its stamps can provide considerable interest and variety for the collector. ▼

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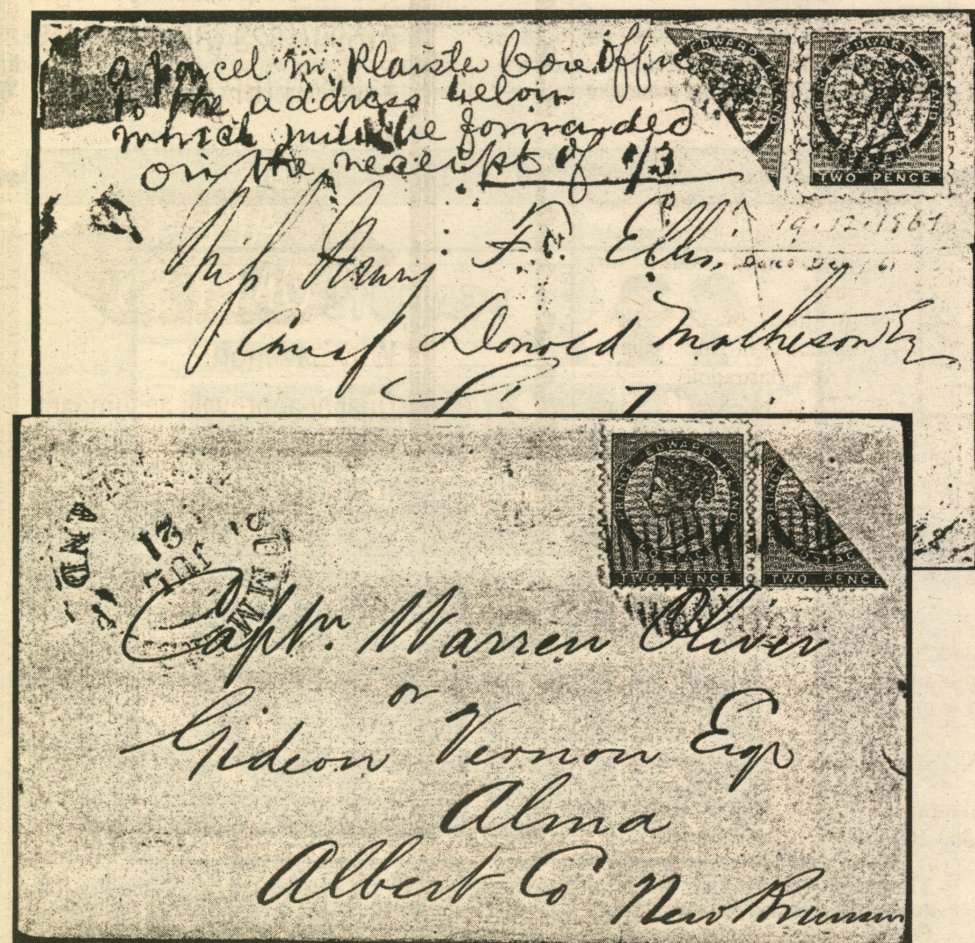


Figure 5: Two bisect 2d covers. The one to Cape Breton (top) is perf 9 and the one to New Brunswick (bottom) is perf 11½x12.