

American Bank Note Co. trade sample sheets of 1868

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The term "proof" normally describes a trial inked impression from a die or printing plate, resulting in a printed image of a complete or partially completed stamp design.

The proofs prepared by the American Bank Note Co. (ABN) for the postal authorities of British North America are, in most cases, plentiful and varied. It is difficult to see that there was a business use for this large quantity of different proofs.

Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to separate contemporary proofs from those that are not contemporary. This observation applies just as well to the pence issues of Canada as it does to the decimal issues of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

One of the most intriguing of these proof issues is what are called trade sample proofs (TSP), coming as they do from quite unusual trade sample sheets (TSS). These sheets, one of which is pictured in Figure 1, are believed to have been printed in 1868, after Canadian Confederation, when the provinces of Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia had ceased using their own stamps.

The ABN made up a special printing plate, likely from the original transfer roll, containing 19 images of the stamps that they had printed for a variety of North, Central and South American countries. This included 11 stamps from British North American colonies: three from Canada, one from New Brunswick, two from Nova Scotia and five from Newfoundland.

The makeup of the sheet was well thought out. The 19 stamps are mathematically aligned — better than most stamp plates of the

period — and there is enough space between to make each subject look like a small die proof, should the TSS be cut down to individual stamps. It is natural that the work would be meticulously well done, since these TSS were intended to show the high quality of the company's engraving and printing techniques.

A few of the stamps in the sheet could be cut into pairs from the same country, such as the 10-penny (Scott 7) and ½d (Scott 8) from Canada, as shown in Figure 2. These pairs are called compound proofs.

The sample sheets were printed in an incredible array of colors, with almost no two colors the same, and on a wide variety of papers. Robert Pratt, in an 1964 article in the British North America Philatelic Society's journal *BNA Topics*, indicated that he knew of trade sample proofs on horizontal mesh wove, vertical ribbed wove, thin bond, laid paper, thick bond, a blue and a brown "chemical

paper," thick white wove, light soft wove, a wove paper with green surface glazing, a greenish yellow wove, and a grayish pink wove. Norman Boyd, a student of the proofs of the period, used to say that the papers varied "from high-quality stamp paper to newsprint."

Some indication of the variety of colors, going from intense bright inks to pale, nearly invisible washed-out tints, can be seen in Figures 3 and 4. In his 1964 article, Pratt points out that some of the colors fade dramatically when exposed to light, while in other cases some inks disappear when the stamp is treated with hydrogen peroxide.

Although they normally exist imperforate, gummed and ungummed, some of the trade sample proofs have been finished: gummed and perforated 11½ (Figure 5). The perforated TSP are virtually all dark-hued stamps and are normally found on thicker paper than the



Figure 1. The 1868 American Bank Note Co. trade sample sheet shows stamp images from various countries in North, Central and South America.



Figure 2. A selection of Canada 10d and ½d compound proofs, cut from ABN trade sample sheets.

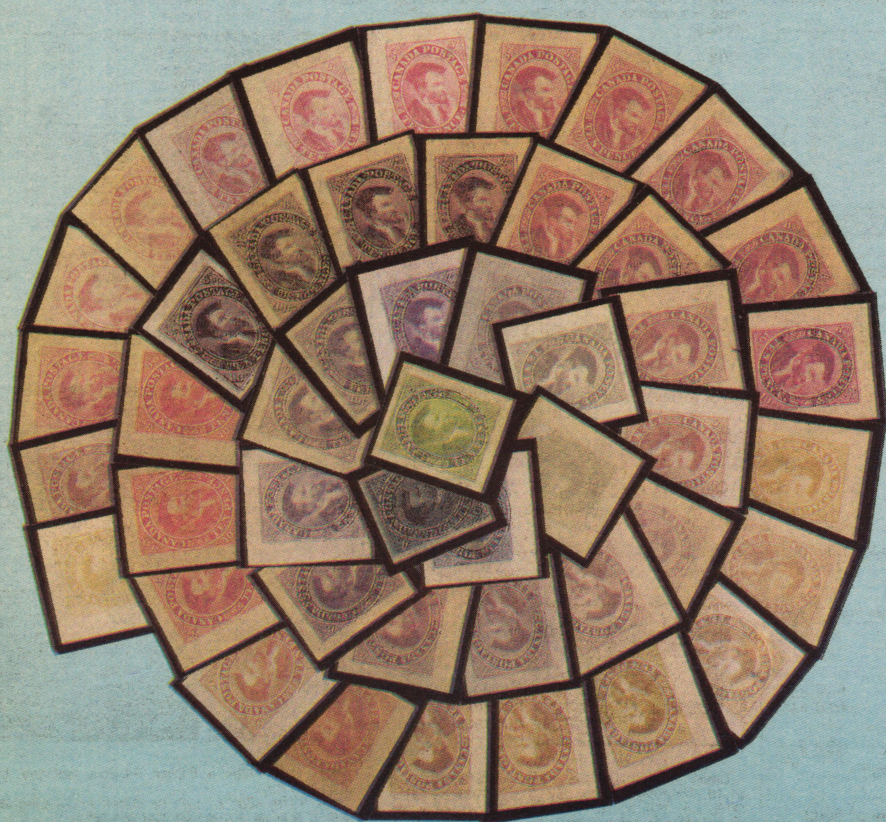


Figure 3. A wheel of color consisting of 10d subjects cut from the trade sample sheets. A few of the hundred or so colors known for the 10d proofs are represented.

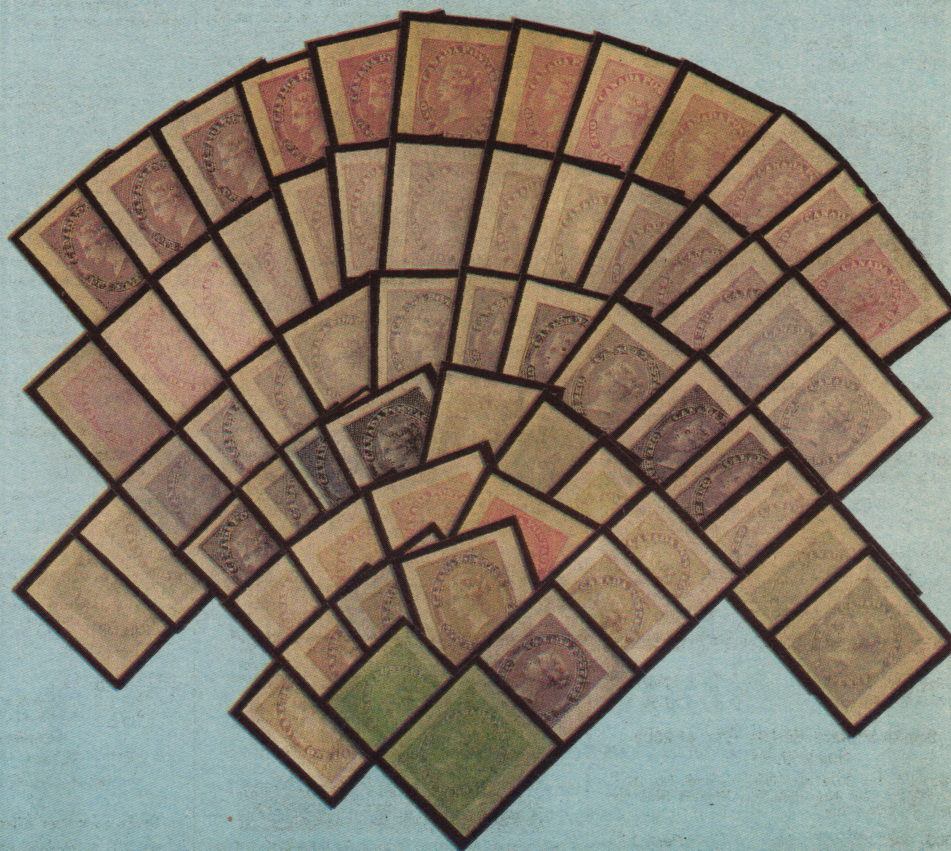


Figure 4. Color varieties known for the ½d proofs are exhibited in a fan-shaped display.



Figure 5. Finished proofs of the 10d and 10d designs, perforated 11½, probably cut from the trade sample sheet.



Figure 6. More proofs of the 10d and 10d designs, canceled with pen strokes.

imperforate proofs. Although most perforated TSPs show many of the identifying marks — such as position dots — that are common to the imperforate proofs, there is no definite evidence that they come from the trade sample sheets.

Another point in favor of a TSS origin is that there are no multiples known. Three kinds of gum are reported on the proofs. Some of the finished proofs have been pen-canceled (Figure 6) and it is known that some of the TSPs have been treated with cancel removers.

The Brigham Collection currently has the largest holdings of TSP from the Province of Canada; the illustrations in this article come from the collection. No exhaustive study has been done of the holding, but a cursory look at the many proofs indicates that Pratt's 1964

comments still stand the test of time.

The black TSP is quite rare, since when it is found, it is usually mistaken for a black die proof and is collected as such. The siderographer's position dots are usually present on the TSP and this is a way of differentiating between trade sample proofs and die proofs.

Why did the ABN produce these proofs? It has long been believed that they came from swatch books given to the firms' salesmen so that, when describing the company's skills, they had visual support for their claims. This would account for the large number of colors and papers. Salesmen would have been able to show the effect of colors and printing techniques on different types of paper. This is the accepted story and it is why the term "trade sample" has been attached to these proofs and sheets.

Boyd could not accept this theory. In 1971, he wrote in *BNA Topics* that, "surely there would be some evidence on each sheet that they had been bound together into booklets. They were not printed in double sheets for binding, and they had no binding stitch-marks or staple holes ... If they were used as sample sheets, surely they would be numbered so the colors or papers could be identified."

Boyd believed that these were made as free souvenirs for influential people who exerted pressure on the ABN for philatelic gifts. He says there were precedents for this at both the ABN and the National Banknote Co., the latter having made up presentation books of faked large die proofs. He felt that, when needed, the ABN took the plate out and ran one or more sheets of the press with the paper and ink color available at the time of printing. This is possible, since the sheets were not, after all, security items and, although they may have had value for stamp collectors, they did not cost the ABN much to create.

I leave it up to you to decide whether the common viewpoint that they are trade samples is the right one or whether Boyd's contention that they are philatelic souvenirs should prevail.

SSM

OVERSTOCKED UNITED STATES!!

U.S. UNUSED F/VF OG NH

481..... 1.10	508..... 14.00	543..... .55	572..... 99.00	619..... 18.00	666..... 115.00	700..... 17.50	2647-96..... 23.00
482..... 1.60	509..... 16.00	548..... 4.75	573..... 210.00	620..... 3.50	667..... 16.80	701..... 38.00	2870..... 180.00
483..... 16.00	510..... 21.00	549..... 7.00	575-7..... 9.75	621..... 13.00	668..... 26.00	704-15..... 15.75	C1..... 75.00
484..... 12.50	511..... 12.00	550..... 42.00	578..... 110.00	622..... 12.00	669..... 4.25	723..... 9.50	C2..... 99.00
486..... 1.00	512..... 11.00	551..... .35	579..... 95.00	623..... 14.00	670..... 3.75	730-31..... 38.00	C3..... 99.00
487..... 16.50	513..... 13.00	552..... 1.59	581..... 12.00	627..... 2.50	671..... 3.75	735..... 8.75	C4..... 28.00
488..... 3.00	514..... 44.00	553..... 2.80	582..... 6.00	628..... 5.75	672..... 15.75	740-49..... 6.50	C5..... 99.00
489..... 5.50	515..... 58.00	554..... 1.60	583..... 3.25	629..... 2.00	673..... 24.00	750-51..... 39.00	C6..... 106.00
490..... .65	516..... 45.00	555..... 19.75	584..... 35.00	630..... 425.00	674..... 21.00	756-65..... 6.50	C7-9..... 15.50
492..... 11.00	517..... 77.00	556..... 21.00	585..... 21.00	631..... 1.80	675..... 51.00	785-94..... 1.75	C10..... 8.75
493..... 18.50	524..... 245.00	557..... 21.00	586..... 21.00	632-42..... 14.50	676..... 28.50	803-31..... 18.00	C11..... 5.50
494..... 12.00	525..... 3.85	558..... 39.00	587..... 10.00	643-46..... 6.00	677..... 40.00	832..... 4.75	C12..... 11.00
495..... 12.00	527..... 21.50	559..... 10.50	588..... 14.00	647..... 4.00	678..... 45.00	833..... 14.00	C13-15..... 1575.00
496..... 4.00	528..... 10.50	560..... 56.00	589..... 32.00	648..... 12.00	679..... 140.00	834..... 65.00	C16..... 6.00
497..... 23.00	528A..... 61.00	561..... 16.00	590..... 6.50	649..... .80	680-79..... 625.00	839-51..... 18.00	C17..... 2.50
498..... .40	528B..... 23.50	562..... 21.00	591..... 77.00	650..... 4.50	680-90..... 9.50	859-93..... 21.00	C18..... 69.00
499..... .40	529..... 3.75	563..... 1.40	597-6..... 21.00	656..... 13.00	692-01..... 81.00	909-21..... 2.50	C19..... 2.75
500..... 335.00	530..... 1.80	564..... 6.95	610..... .50	658..... 2.50	692..... 2.25	1053..... 55.00	C20-22..... 16.00
501..... 13.25	531..... 10.50	565..... 4.25	611..... 5.00	659..... 4.25	693..... 4.50	1633-82..... 15.00	C25-31..... 14.00
502..... 17.00	534..... 12.00	566..... 27.00	612..... 13.00	660..... 4.50	694..... 1.75	1686-89..... 15.00	C37..... .70
503..... 12.00	536..... 25.00	567..... 24.00	614..... 2.55	661..... 24.00	695..... 3.00	1953-02..... 18.00	C41..... 2.10
504..... 10.50	537..... 11.00	568..... 21.00	615..... 5.50	662..... 24.00	696..... 6.50	2216-19..... 16.00	C52..... 1.40
505..... 425.00	538..... 13.75	569..... 36.00	616..... 19.00	663..... 14.50	697..... 4.00	2286-35..... 30.00	C61..... 2.90
506..... 14.00	540..... 15.00	570..... 61.00	617..... 2.00	664..... 35.00	698..... 8.00	2433..... 12.00	QE1-4..... 21.00
507..... 32.00	542..... 15.00	571..... 48.00	618..... 4.00	665..... 31.00	699..... 8.50	2436..... 2.75	

F/VF OR BETTER USED (Scott #'s 1-191 will be Fine or Better)

1..... 325.00	79..... 675.00	147..... 0.75	208..... 36.00	261..... 210.00	326..... 15.00	404..... 39.00	C4..... 9.75
2..... 695.00	86..... 205.00	148..... 11.00	209..... 3.50	274..... 6.00	327..... 18.00	407..... 7.75	C5..... 18.00
7..... 72.00	87..... 63.00	149..... 40.00	210..... 0.30	275..... 12.75	328..... 2.40	419..... 10.50	C6..... 18.00
9..... 56.00	88..... 10.25	150..... 9.50	211..... 7.25	276..... 48.00	329..... 2.10	420..... 10.50	C18..... 42.00
10..... 45.00	89..... 135.00	151..... 72.00	212..... 1.00	276A..... 105.00	330..... 16.50	421..... 13.00	E1..... 27.00
11..... 5.50	90..... 160.00	152..... 72.00	213..... 0.25	277..... 255.00	331..... 14.00	422..... 11.50	E2..... 10.50
12..... 495.00	91..... 280.00	153..... 65.00	214..... 27.00	278..... 395.00	342..... 63.00	423..... 42.00	E3..... 13.50
14..... 105.00	92..... 90.00	154..... 85.00	215..... 9.00	285..... 3.75	343..... 3.00	476..... 10.00	E4..... 18.00
15..... 105.00	93..... 21.00	155..... 135.00	216..... 7.00	286..... 0.90	344..... 2.25	477..... 45.50	E7..... 24.00
17..... 145.00	94..... 4.00	156..... 2.00	217..... 48.00	287..... 14.00	345..... 14.00	478..... 14.00	F1..... 4.50
20..... 112.00	95..... 335.00	157..... 7.50	218..... 112.00	288..... 12.00	345..... 35.00	479..... 29.00	Q1-6..... 10.50
24..... 18.00	96..... 90.00	158..... 0.25	227..... 12.00	289..... 24.00	346..... 15.00	490..... 29.00	Q7..... 7.20
25..... 38.00	97..... 99.00	159..... 9.00	228..... 18.00	290..... 16.00	347..... 24.00	500..... 145.00	Q8..... 15.00
26..... 3.50	98..... 135.00	160..... 36.00	229..... 65.00	291..... 115.00	367..... 1.00	500 Fine..... 115.00	Q9..... 4.00
26A..... 25.00	99..... 450.00	161..... 8.50	230-31..... 0.50	292..... 450.00	368..... 12.00	505 Fine..... 325.00	Q10..... 24.50
32..... 123.00	100..... 235.00	162..... 43.00	232..... 9.00	293..... 650.00	369..... 170.00	523..... 195.00	Q11..... 21.00
33..... 123.00	112..... 72.00	163..... 48.00	233..... 4.25	294..... 1.80	370..... 1.25	524..... 24.50	Q12..... 21.00
35..... 29.00	113..... 33.00	165..... 45.00	234..... 4.80	295..... 0.60	371..... 13.50	537..... 2.50	Q13..... 2.75
36..... 110.00	114..... 9.50	166..... 112.00	235..... 13.50	296..... 9.00	372..... 2.75	547..... 28.00	Q14..... 10.50
37..... 160.00	115..... 94.50	178..... 6.00	236..... 6.25	297..... 9.00	373..... 14.00	550..... 7.50	Q15..... 11.00
63..... 14.50	116..... 63.00	179..... 9.00	237..... 4.80	298..... 29.50	390..... 4.25	572..... 5.50	Q16..... 3.25
64b..... 68.00	117..... 65.00	182..... 2.00	238..... 40.00	299..... 15.00	391..... 9.80	573..... 9.00	Q17..... 27.00
65..... 1.25	118..... 295.00	183..... 1.50	239..... 51.00	308..... 4.50	392..... 15.75	578..... 120.00	Q18..... 3.00
67..... 360.00	119..... 120.00	184..... 0.25	240..... 92.00	309..... 2.85	393..... 6.00	579..... 105.00	Q19..... 80.00
68..... 22.50	120..... 335.00	185..... 6.00	241..... 390.00	310..... 13.50	394..... 37.00	599A..... 6.50	Q20..... 105.00
69..... 45.00	121..... 248.00	186..... 9.00	242..... 345.00	311..... 33.00	395..... 33.00	620-21..... 7.50	Q21..... 49.00
70..... 78.00	122..... 880.00	187..... 11.00	243..... 620.00	312..... 110.00	396..... 33.00	634A..... 8.00	Q22..... 38.00
71..... 72.00	134..... 63.00	188..... 11.50	244..... 810.00	313..... 525.00	397-98..... 1.25	832b..... 52.00	Q23..... 11.50
72..... 225.00	135..... 31.50	189..... 10.00	245..... 960.00	314..... 9.00	399..... 5.75	833..... 2.65	Q24..... 11.00
73..... 22.00	136..... 9.00	190..... 25.00	256..... 13.50	315..... 280.00	400..... 12.00	834..... 2.50	Q25..... 7.50
75..... 205.00	137..... 235.00	191..... 125.00	257..... 10.25	320..... 7.25	400a..... 9.50	1053..... 4.50	Q26..... 6.00
76..... 50.00	138..... 190.00	205..... 4.75	258..... 6.50	323..... 2.40	401..... 3.00	C1..... 18.00	Q27..... 21.00
77..... 68.00	145..... 6.75	206..... 0.50	259..... 32.00	324..... 0.90	402..... 1.00	C2..... 21.00	Q28..... 4.50
78..... 45.00	146..... 4.50	207..... 0.25	260..... 72.00	325..... 18.00	403..... 9.00	C3..... 21.00	Q29..... 4.50

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