

Canada's 12 Penny Black

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

Canada's third stamp, the 12 penny (12d) on laid paper, issued June 14, 1851, in sheets of 100 (10x10), is considered Canada's premier stamp. Although it is not the most elusive, that status is reserved to the green 2¢ Large Queen on laid paper, it certainly is the one that most collectors view as representing the rarity and expensiveness of Canadian philately.

On May 4, 1851, 51,000 copies were printed and delivered by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E), the New York engravers and printers of the Province of Canada's stamps. Of these, only 1,450 copies were sold by post offices across the Province.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the stamps to post offices during the use of the stamp. The last order for 50 stamps from Smith's Falls was processed Dec. 4, 1854, leaving a balance on hand of 49,550, including 60 copies returned from the Ingersoll, Canada West, Post Office.

According to the then-common practice regarding discontinued stamps, remainders were destroyed on May 1, 1857. The plate itself was cancelled and forwarded to the Post Office on March 26, 1857. The die was retained and became the basis for the new 7-1/2d.

The existence of the defaced plate was revealed when it was removed from a sealed box, where it had lain since 1857, during the awards banquet of the 1963 Convention of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada held in Windsor, Ontario. It is currently housed at

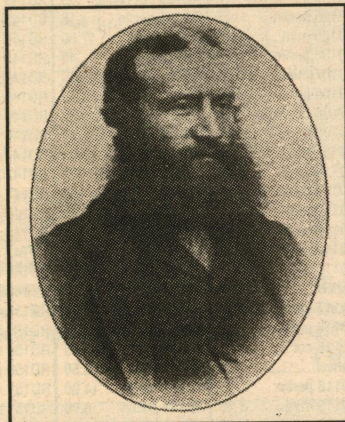


Figure 1: Sir Sandford Fleming (1827-1915), designer of Canada's first stamps.

the Canadian Postal Archives which are part of the National Archives of Canada.

It is not generally known that Sir Sandford Fleming (Figure 1), the designer of Canada's first stamps, was also responsible for the design of this adhesive. When he was asked to design the stamps by Postmaster General John Morris, Fleming proposed a one-shilling stamp showing the beaver, whose image could also be found on the 3d he designed.

To differentiate them, Fleming designed an octagonal frame to the shilling beaver stamp while the 3d had an oval one (Figure 2). Morris, on the other hand, felt that the design should be different and that the shilling denomination should be changed to 12d sterling. The reason behind this currency clarification had to do with the fact that the term shilling had different meanings in different parts of North America. In the Province of Canada 12d sterling was worth 15d currency.

Fleming then proposed a design based on the famous E. A. Chalon painting of Queen Victoria presented to her mother, the Duchess of Kent, in commemoration of Queen Victoria's first visit to the House of Lords on July 17, 1837 (Figure 3).

There is an interesting story relating to the engraving in the hands of Fleming when he designed the 12d black. The government of the United Canadas (the name the colonies bore before becoming the Province of Canada) had ordered a copy of the Chalon portrait from the painter John Partridge to grace the wall above the Speaker's throne in the Legislative Assembly. Fleming had spent many hours in the Assembly hall taking surveying courses and had admired the painting.

On April 25, 1845, riots broke out in Montreal and the Legislative buildings were set on fire. Fleming rushed to rescue Queen Victoria's portrait. Outside he removed the heavy frame and rolled the painting up and took it to his studio. Six years later he still had the painting and this is what he used as a model to design the 12d. At the same time Postmaster General Morris asked that the painting be returned to the Government.

The stamp was engraved by Alfred Jones under the direction of James Parsons Major, head of the engraving department at RWH&E. Dies were prepared and proofs were pulled on April 23, 1851 (none have yet surfaced). Trial color proofs exist in black

only with specimen overprints in carmine (vertical and horizontal) and green (vertical).

The so called yellow specimen overprint does not exist and is only a faded version of the carmine overprint. Proofs without overprints do not exist either. Those offered on the market have the overprint faded totally away or have the overprint removed, presumably with chemicals. Specimens are scarce. Only a few hundred have appeared on the market.

It is not known why full proof sheets of the 12d have surfaced so rarely. Only two are recorded. There were none in the sale of the American Bank Note Archives in 1990. In June 1997, at PACIFIC 97, Ivy Mader Philatelic Auctions sold as lot 1001 "The American Bank Note Company/New York/Specimens of Postage Stamps enormously valuable archival proof book."

In the book were full proof sheets of all Province of Canada stamps in the color of issue. The 12d sheet in the book (Figure 4) is the only sheet that bears a specimen overprint (carmine, vertical).

This was an important discovery for Canadian philately since no other full sheet of the 12d had been available for plating since that in the Dale-Lichtenstein sale (Sale 7, Lot 832, Jan. 29, 1970). That sheet had been purchased and split up by Toronto stamp dealer, J. N. Sissons. Neither Mrs. Dale nor Lichtenstein nor Sissons are known to have plated the stamp.

John Jamieson of Saskatoon Stamp Centre purchased the sheet on sale at PACIFIC 97 and, with the help of Canadian reentry and plating experts, is currently ensuring that a proper plating is made and records kept for posterity.

A recording of all extant 12d has not been made in many years. L. N. Williams estimates that 120 copies may exist today. They include 50 mint/unused copies and slightly more used copies. New copies appear from time to time. In December 1997, an unused four margin copy was certified by The Greene Foundation and offered for sale by H. R. Harmer, Inc.

Records are more complete for pairs, the largest multiple recorded, and for examples on cover. There are five mint/unused pairs currently recorded (Table 2), two used pairs and six authenticated covers (Table 3).

The finest pair is the one currently housed in the Canadian Postal Archives (Figure 5). The pair first appeared for sale on July 21, 1924, in Victoria, British Columbia, when a son of the original owner asked Victoria stamp dealer Ronald M. Angus to sell it for him.

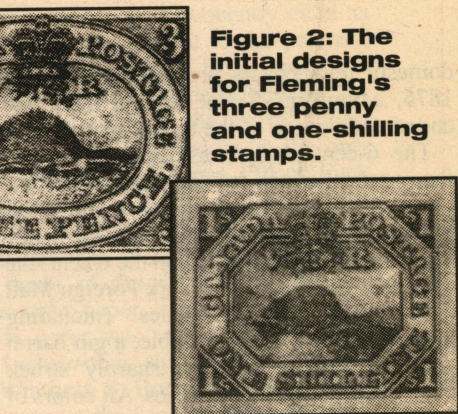
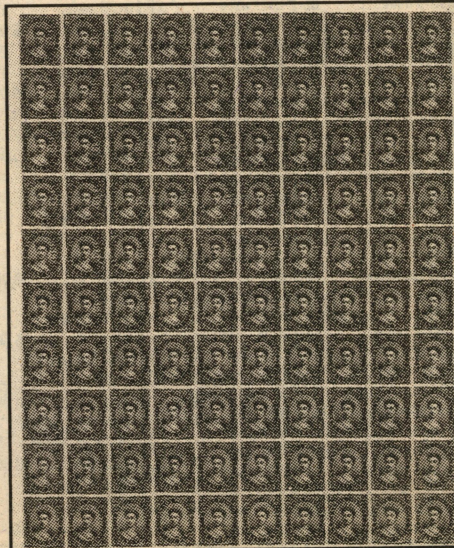


Figure 2: The initial designs for Fleming's three penny and one-shilling stamps.



Figure 3: The E. A. Chalon portrait of Queen Victoria painted on the occasion of her first visit to the House of Lords, July 17, 1837, as a gift to her mother, the Duchess of Kent.

Angus reported that the father had been a post office employee who, his son said, had cut a strip of four 12d stamps from a sheet in the 1850s when he learned that Canadian currency would be changed from pence to cents.

Angus quickly sent eight letters offering it to three prominent North American collectors — Arthur Hind, Dr. Lewis Reford and Atlanticus (now known to be Alfred Lichtenstein). Lichtenstein was successful in obtaining it for \$4,000. It remained in the Dale-Lichtenstein collection until 1970 when it was offered for sale for the estate by H. R. Harmer (Sale 10) selling for \$40,000 to William Maresch, a Toronto stamp dealer.

It changed hands one or more times before being bought for \$75,000 by Canada Post's National Postal Museum in 1975. Although the pair is real, the Angus story needs some examining since the remainders of the 12d were destroyed in May 1857, and the currency change only happened in July 1859.

Another pair has been on display at the British Museum since the mid-1890s. It belonged to Thomas Keay Tapling who bequeathed his extensive stamp collection to the British nation at his death in 1891.

Tapling, a member of the British Parliament, may have purchased his 12d pair from the Caillebotte Collection which he purchased in Paris in 1887. The link has not been proven, but it is a good bet since more than half of Tapling's collection came from Caillebotte.

The three other pairs are currently available to collectors. Two are in The Brigham Collection and one was last seen on display at ANPHILEX, the 100th birthday exhibi-

Figure 4: The full proof sheet of Canada's 12d offered in the PACIFIC 97 Ivy Mader philatelic auction on June 2, 1997.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF 12D BLACKS

Date of Issue	Name of Office	Name of Postmaster	No.
June 14, 1851	Hamilton, CW	Ritchie, E.	300
Oct. 17, 1851	Chippewa, CW	Hepburn, W.	100
Nov. 13, 1851	Thorold, CW	Keefer, J.	200
Mar. 8, 1852	Montreal, CE	Porteous, J.	200
Sept. 14, 1852	Ingersoll, CW	Phelan, D.	100
Apr. 5, 1853	Bytown, CW	Baker, G. W.	15
Jan. 13, 1854	Smith's Falls, CW	Shaw, Jas.	50
Jan. 20, 1854	Bytown, CW	Baker, G. W.	100
Feb. 8, 1854	L'Islet, CE	Ballantyne, ?	15
Feb. 27, 1854	Ingersoll, CW	Chadwick, ?	20
Mar. 22, 1854	Sault Ste Marie, CW	Wilson, Jos.	25
May 15, 1854	Portage du Fort, CE	McLaren, ?	15
Oct. 21, 1854	Rowan Mills, CE	De Blaquiére, ?	50
Oct. 26, 1854	Melbourne, CE	Tait, Thos.	50
Oct. 27, 1854	Montreal, CE	La Rocque, A.	100
Dec. 4, 1854	Smith's Falls, CW	Shaw, Jas.	50

In the table, "CW" = Canada West (the present province of Ontario) and "CE" = Canada East (the present province of Quebec).

TABLE 2: UNUSED 12D PAIRS

Pair #	Current whereabouts	Plate position	Provenance
1	Canadian Postal Archives	91-92	Postal employee, Dale-Lichtenstein, Maresch
2	The Brigham Collection	93-94 (?)	Dale-Lichtenstein, Nickle
3	The British Museum-The Tapling Collection	Lower margin pair (90-100)	Caillebotte (?), Tapling
4	The Brigham Collection	?	Hind, Hewitt, Foxbridge
5	Corinphila	?	?

tion of the Collectors Club of New York in November 1996, courtesy of the European firm Corinphila. Of the two used pairs recorded, one is in The Brigham Collection and was formerly in the Pack, Hilmer and Foxbridge collections.

There really was no important postal rate that required the existence of such a stamp. In its short life, it could have paid the double weight rate to the United States (6d per 1/2-

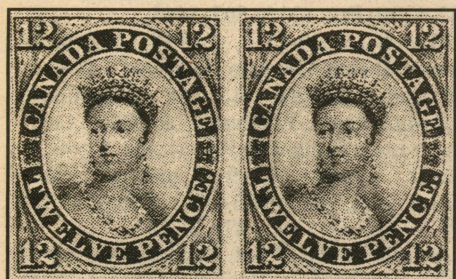


Figure 5: From the Canadian Postal Archives, the finest recorded pair of Canada's 12d black (positions 91 and 92 in the sheet). (Courtesy, The National Archives of Canada)

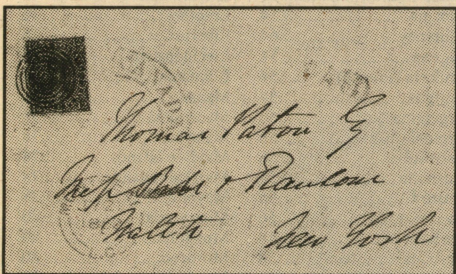


Figure 6: The most prized of the covers bearing a 12d. The "Paton" cover, named after the addressee, has been owned by some of the world's greatest philatelists. In 1993, it was sold from the Nickle estate for U.S. \$250,000.

ounce); the quadruple rate in the Province (3d per 1/2 ounce); and the single rate for the fortnightly mails from Montreal via Boston for Newfoundland and to the British West Indies via Halifax and Liverpool.

All these rates are extremely rare and, in fact, only six covers are recorded. Five pay the double rate to the United States and one overpays the 10d rate per British Packet to the United Kingdom.

Several other covers have been seen over the years, some claiming to be on wove paper, but none have been authenticated by reputable certifying authorities.

Only one of the six authenticated covers listed in Table 3, the "Paton" cover dated July 21, 1852, has been accepted without question (Figure 6). Its price realization at auction, U.S. \$250,000, is an indication of this.

Of the remaining five, one is in The Royal Collection of Queen Elizabeth II and has been there at least since 1911. The most recently certified cover is the one addressed to Mrs. Bevis and the only one not mailed to the United States.

The cover (Figure 7) has been controver-



Figure 7: The "Bevis" cover is controversial, being used out-of-period and overpaying the rate by 2d.

sial since its discovery. It was brought to Robson Lowe for an opinion in July 1976, on the recommendation of dealer Gerald Davis. The controversy surrounding the cover is based on two major facts: the date of use, August 30, 1856, which is after the stamps were no longer on sale and the overpayment of 2d of the 10d rate by British Packet to England. Other minor discrepancies are cited as well.

The cover received a clean bill of health from The Greene Foundation (The expertising arm of the Vincent Graves Green Philaelic Research Foundation) on the basis of its provenance and scientific research. It still belonged to the Bevis family when it appeared on the market. The writer, William Footner was the addressee's brother. He was a merchant in Hamilton and more than likely had the 12d stamp in his possession and had no other use for it.

More importantly, The Greene Foundation lifted the stamp from the cover and the clean patch below it showed exactly the same size as the stamp and the folds in the stamp matched those in the cover exactly. In addition, The Greene Foundation asked the Ontario Research Foundation (ORF) to complete a forensic study of the cover, the stamp and its inks and compare them to similar items from available Hamilton covers of the same period.

Ian Murray, research scientist in the Department of Applied Physics at the ORF, indicated in his nine page report that the cover, stamp and inks were genuine. This shows how detailed research is needed if a philatelic item of such magnitude is to be certified as genuine.

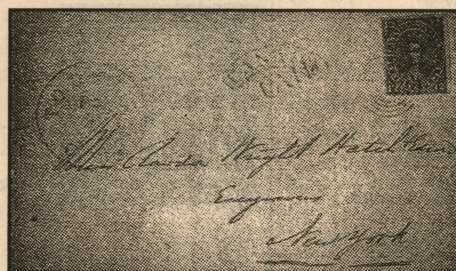


Figure 8: Once in the Lichtenstein collection, this cover was thought to be the only cover bearing a 12d on thick wove paper. It has since been found to bear a scarred die proof (see Figure 9).

Another cover that is frequently cited as authentic is one addressed to the printers, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson, and sent by the Canadian Post Office (Figure 8). For years it graced many of the world's finest collections. It was believed to be the only example on cover of the rare 12d on thick wove paper.

As there had been only one printing of the 12d, and this was on laid paper, there was always doubt of the validity of any 12d found on wove paper. It was not until 1946, when the cover was in the possession of Alfred Lichtenstein, that the solution was found. Winthrop S. Boggs, who had unimpeded access to the Lichtenstein collection, in his *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada*, explains:

"Further copies were used by the Department" (Post Office) "in franking letters outside of Canada, notably to the Engravers. This was the proof sheet on thick wove and this instance creates a peculiar situation in which a proof becomes what might be termed an "official stamp."

Experts today are of the opinion that only the laid paper can be recognized as a stamp and the wove copies are proofs, with or without the imprint removed or are from the scarred die found in the compound secondary die proofs produced in 1864 (Figure 9).

A small secondary die was laid down by transfer roll. It contained a 12d and a 10c from the 1859 Cents issue. The 12d is scored by fine lines through "CE" of the word "PENCE."

There are many unproven stories surrounding these stamps as there seem to be with many philatelic rarities. Here are two of the more far-fetched examples.

C. J. Phillips, one time President of Stanley Gibbons, informed the Toronto Stamp Club in the Fall of 1941, that a gentleman entered the store and offered a 12d for sale.

The customer informed Phillips that he wished to sell the stamp as there was a wedding in the family and he needed funds to buy a present. Phillips asked the man who he was and he replied, "My name is Argyle." It was the Duke of Argyle, former Marquess of Lorne, son-in-law to Queen Victoria and a former Governor General of Canada.

The Duke reappeared from time to time with another copy for sale carefully clipped from a part sheet in his possession. Who knows how many pairs and blocks the Duke divided. I would think his nephew, King George V, the foremost royal philatelist, would have been appalled at his uncle's doings.

Another story revolves around a certain miserly old gentleman who lived on the shores of the St. Lawrence. One day in July 1851, when confronted for money by a dissolute nephew, the miser rushed to stuff his bonds into an envelope and put them in a small safe. A struggle ensued, a lamp overturned and the house was set on fire. The uncle threw the safe out of the window before becoming a victim of the fire. Many years later, in 1892, during dredging operations in the St. Lawrence, the safe was found, opened and in it were the bonds in an envelope that bore a 12d.

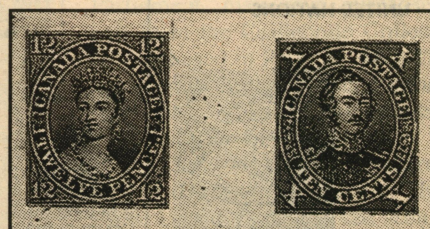


Figure 9: A carmine compound secondary die proof printed in 1864. It contains a 12d and a 10c from the 1859 Cents issue. The 12d is scored by fine lines through the "CE" of "PENCE."

TABLE 3: 12D ON COVER

Cover date	From	To	Addressee	Tied -Not tied/Reference	Provenance
July 19, 1852	Hamilton	New York	D. J. Kennedy	Stamp UR not tied to cover (Boggs, Harmer's 1956 Lichtenstein sale, Harmer's 1968 Dr. Geldert sale and Christie's 1989 The Weill Brothers Stock sale)	Lichtenstein, Geldert, Foxbridge
July 21, 1852	Montreal	New York	Thomas Paton	Stamp UL tied to cover (Howes, Jarrett, Boggs, Harmer's 1968 Dale-Lichtenstein sale, Christie's 1993 Nickle sale, Siegel's 1996 K. L. Collection sale)	Worthington, Dale-Lichtenstein, Nickle and Rose
Jan. 3, 1853	Hamilton	New York	Address cut out	Stamp UR tied (Howes, Exhibited at CAPEX '51 and CAPEX '96)	The Royal Collection
Dec. 19, 1855	Toronto	New York	James McMaster	Stamp UR not tied, marginal copy (Boggs, Sissons 1974 Pipkin sale)	Pipkin, The Lindemann Collection, The Brigham Collection
Sept. 1, 1856	Hamilton	Gosport England	Mrs. Bevis	Stamp UR tied to cover (Robson Lowe private publication, Christie's 1989 The Weill Brothers Stock sale, Saskatoon Stamp Centre Catalogue #188)	The Bevis Family, Robson Lowe, ?, The Brigham Collection
185?	Hamilton	New York	Address cut out	Not tied (Howes)	Possibly John Rose. More info. needed