

Canada's early Elizabethan definitives fell victim to philatelic and postal forgeries

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Until the 1960s, no postal counterfeits or forgeries were reported in Canada. In stamp collecting, the terms postal forgery and counterfeit are used interchangeably to describe a stamp created to defraud a postal administration or government by using it to pay postage. The term "philatelic forgery" describes a stamp created to defraud stamp collectors.

With improved offset-lithography printing capabilities in the 1960s, counterfeiters found it easier to replicate Canadian definitive stamps.

The 4¢ violet stamp pictured in Figure 1 (Scott 340), from the 1954-61 Wilding Portrait series, was the first Canadian stamp to be counterfeited. In response to a query from stamp collector E.H. Hausmann, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) informed him that "on December 6, 1960, eight counterfeit Canadian 4¢ postage stamps were recovered in Montreal." The RCMP did not provide the results of the prosecution in this case.

The crude counterfeit stamps were lithographed in blue ink rather than the stamp's violet color and had a washed-out appearance. No other

examples were found, and none are known to be in collectors' hands today. The RCMP exhibited the counterfeits at stamp shows in the 1970s and early 1980s, but they haven't been displayed since then. As far as I can determine, no photograph of the counterfeit 4¢ violet stamp exists.

A little more than four years later, on February 17, 1965, the RCMP searched a garage in Chomedey (now part of Laval), Quebec. They seized 6,777,000 counterfeit 4¢ carmine stamps (Scott 404, Figure 2) from the 1962-63 Elizabeth II Cameo definitive series. In addition, the RCMP found two printing presses and other printing paraphernalia. They arrested and charged six people, but only one person was convicted, sentenced to one day in jail and fined \$1,000 in Canadian funds.

A businessman discovered the counterfeit and informed the police. The stamps were used at a sub-post office that processed large mailings of medical and hospital bills.

The counterfeit stamp is dull orange-carmine; some experts refer to it as pinkish carmine. The major difference between the lithographed counterfeit and the engraved genuine stamp (aside from the printing method) is the mottling at the top of

the crosshatching. The original was perforated 11¼; the counterfeit is poorly perforated 12.4.

About 200 examples exist unused, used and on cover or piece. They retail between U.S. \$75 and U.S. \$200. Many of the counterfeits are on covers with Hospital Service Association corner cards or are on mail originating from Berke's Pharmacy in Montreal.

The 4¢ carmine-rose stamp (Scott 457, Figure 3) from the 1967-72 Centennial definitive series also was counterfeited, but the RCMP seized all 750,000 counterfeits before they reached the philatelic market.

On October 22, 1967, the RCMP searched a residence in Laval and arrested an individual, who was charged and convicted under the Criminal Code and sentenced July 19, 1968, to one day in jail with a fine of \$1,000 Canadian. The RCMP continued its investigation in this matter and discovered the name of the backer of the operation, who was subsequently charged but found not guilty.

No photograph or description of this counterfeit has been made available by the RCMP. The counterfeit was printed by lithography.

The three counterfeits discussed



Figure 1. No photo is available of the postal counterfeit of Canada's 4¢ violet stamp (Scott 340) with the Wilding portrait of Elizabeth II.



Figure 2. The genuine 4¢ carmine stamp (Scott 404) from Canada's 1962-63 Elizabeth II Cameo definitive series is shown at left. A postal counterfeit of the stamp is pictured in black and white at right. The counterfeit originally was discovered by a businessman in Canada.



Figure 3. The 4c carmine-rose stamp (Scott 457) from Canada's Centennial series. No photograph of the counterfeit stamp is available.

thus far were of 4c stamps because this was the local first-class rate for letters up to one ounce. These counterfeits were easier to sell surreptitiously and in large quantities, because they frequently saw use on large commercial mailings. The

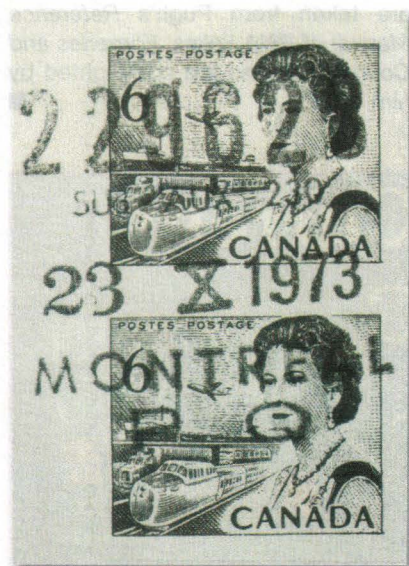


Figure 5. Black-and-white images of a pair of the 6c orange philatelic forgery and a block of four. The pair has a genuine Montreal cancel. A few of the forgeries are known used.



Figure 4. Another denomination from Canada's Centennial series, the 6c orange (Scott 459), shown at left. A counterfeit stamp is shown in black and white at right. The RCMP discovered the counterfeits when they arrested a Montreal resident with printing plates in his possession.

local letter rate was dropped November 1, 1968, and all subsequent counterfeits were of stamps that paid the domestic letter rate.

Another well-documented counterfeit was reported extensively in the local press. Whether more than one counterfeiting ring was involved is not clear. The 6c orange stamp (Scott 459), from the Centennial series, was issued November 1, 1968. On April 22, 1969, the RCMP discovered the first counterfeits of the stamp when a Montreal resident was arrested for possession of two aluminum plates bearing an impression of the stamp and 500 sheets of gummed paper. The person was convicted November 29, 1969, and received a six-month suspended sentence. Genuine and counterfeit stamps are shown in Figure 4.

In June 1969, while searching a summer cottage in Quebec, the RCMP seized 700,000 counterfeit stamps, a printing press and a perforator. On January 21, 1970, they



searched a Montreal residence and confiscated 450 counterfeit stamps. The perpetrator was sentenced to 15 days in jail and fined \$100 Canadian.

In April 1970, police arrested a Toronto man in possession of 468 counterfeited 6c orange stamps. The case against him was dismissed. A month later, a Montreal man was arrested for distributing 2,000 counterfeit stamps to local businesses. He was sentenced to one hour in jail and fined \$100 Canadian. Again in Montreal, on August 28, 1970, the RCMP found 102,300 counterfeit stamps in a locker at the Canadian Pacific Railway's Windsor Station. They arrested a woman, who was sentenced to seven months in jail.

Richard Gratton reported in the journal *Fakes, Forgeries and Experts*, Number VIII (2005), that, in August 1970, 800,000 counterfeits were seized at a pornographic publisher's office.

The genuine 6c orange shows



Figure 6. The Canadian Post Office Department added this 6c black stamp (Scott 460) to the Centennial series to replace the widely counterfeited 6c orange. Forgeries of this stamp were created using a photocopier.

modes of transportation and is perforated gauge 10 (Scott 459) and 12½ by 12 (Scott 459b). The counterfeiters used Scott 459b as their model and perforated their creations at gauge 12.6. The counterfeit stamps were lithographed on uncoated wove paper. They can be easily identified under ultraviolet light, because the matte paper glows a bluish tint. The queen's eyes and hair are solid blobs of color rather than finely engraved lines, and the "6" and "CANADA" are pale orange compared to the dark orange of the original. Collectors can find these counterfeits priced between U.S. \$60 and U.S. \$75.

Many collectors of the Centennial issue want an example of the counterfeit in their collection, making this

a popular item. Only about 500 are known.

An enterprising person created philatelic forgeries of the 6¢ orange stamp to defraud collectors. This forgery, perforated gauge 12 vertically and imperforate horizontally, is noticeably different from the known 6¢ Centennial counterfeit. About 200 copies are believed to exist, with a few used examples known (Figure 5). The philatelic forgeries sell for about U.S. \$125.

Because the 6¢ orange counterfeits were so prevalent, on January 7, 1970, the Canada Post Office Department issued a 6¢ stamp in black with the same design (Scott 460, Figure 6) to replace the orange stamp. But again, forgers created a poor-quality forgery of this

stamp on DAVAC gummed paper, this time using a photocopier. The perforations gauge 13 and were probably made by using a sewing machine.

The forgeries of Scott 459 and 460 are both recorded used but were likely philatelically inspired. More than 1,000 examples are recorded and can be obtained for about U.S. \$25 each.

I am indebted to Richard Gratton and Kenneth Pugh, the foremost researchers on Canadian counterfeits, frauds, fakes and forgeries, for much of the information found in this article.

The illustrations of the counterfeits are taken from Pugh's *Reference Manual of BNA Fakes, Forgeries and Counterfeits* and are copyrighted by him. ■

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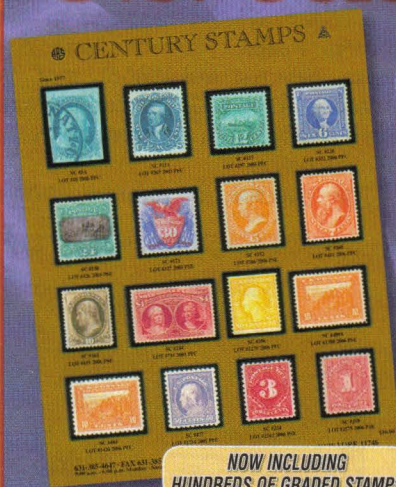
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