

Collecting New Brunswick: A Primer

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

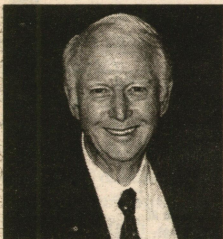


Figure 1: J. Ron Saint, philatelist, collector and student of New Brunswick stamps and postal history. (Courtesy ROYAL * 1999 * ROYALE).

In this age of philatelic specialization and by-the-rules exhibiting it is refreshing to find someone who marches to his own drummer. J. Ron Saint (Figure 1) is such a man. He has collected New Brunswick for more than 40 years. Collector may be the wrong word to apply to him; student and philatelist would be more appropriate. Although he collected all of the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland at one time, he has a special place in his heart for New Brunswick.

British North America (BNA) has always been popular among British Commonwealth collectors. My perception is that, after Canada, the provinces and colonies that composed BNA are in order of collecting preference: Newfoundland; British Columbia and Vancouver Island; Nova Scotia; New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island (PEI).

Normally one sees joint collections of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick exhibited. Three spectacular exhibits belonged to Nicholas Argenti in the 1950s, Hiroyuki Kanai in the 1980s and, the most successful of them all, Koh Seow Chuan in the 1990s. Koh won the Grand Prix National at CAPEX '96 (Toronto, Ontario) and then went on to win the Grand Prix International at INDEPEX '97 (New Delhi, India) with his Nova Scotia and New Brunswick combined exhibit.

The reasons underlying this joint collecting are simple. The Post Office in Colonial Nova Scotia was originally responsible for the mails in New Brunswick; the stamps of both provinces were similar in design and shape; the postal rates were the same; and most exhibitors feel that the "sexy" part of the philately of either of the provinces, the Pence issues, is not enough for a world class exhibit without adding the Pence of the other province.

Although J. Ron Saint's exhibit of New Brunswick has garnered gold and grand awards at the National level, it would not have done so well at the international level because it is all encompassing and vast (10 to 13 frames of 16 pages each). Saint prefers to display the research and the variety rather than limit himself to the spectacular. Early dates and late dates of use of handstamps, for example, are more important to him than rare Pence destinations. All illustrations in this article, except where noted, are from the Saint collection.

As a stamp issuing entity, New Brunswick was active between September 1851 and July 1867, with its stamps being in general use until April 1868, nine months after it

joined the Canadian Confederation. Its philately started well before that. In fact, the first post office to serve New Brunswick was opened in 1754 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The first post office in New Brunswick itself was established at St. John in 1783 with the first postal markings, straightlines, being put in use in 1785 (Figure 2).

With the change in the seat of government that same year, a new post office was opened in Fredericton and straightline postmarks appeared from there as well (Figure 3). As post offices opened in New Brunswick, more straightlines appeared either as handstamps or in manuscript. A number of other postmarks came in use in the early part of the 19th century including the "fleuron" type (Figure 4) and circular postmarks.

About 1833 a Star circular handstamp was introduced. All these handstamps measure 21-24mm with the one exception being the first Miramichi Star cancel that measured 28mm. Ten New Brunswick towns were issued these handstamps. The Dorchester handstamp was inscribed in error "N.S." for Nova Scotia rather than "N.B." (Figure 5). It's not an unusual error because Dorchester sat on the border between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

High postal rates led Maritimers to seek means of transmitting the mail outside the official channels, mainly by having the letters carried by travelers or, earlier in the century, by Indian runners. Figure 6 shows a

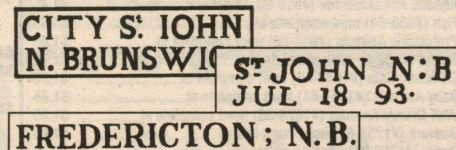


Figure 3: A variety of St. John and Fredericton straightlines.

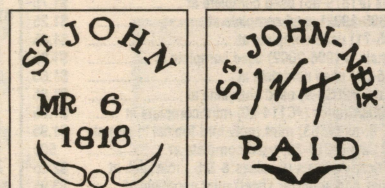


Figure 4: St. John "fleuron" type handstamp.

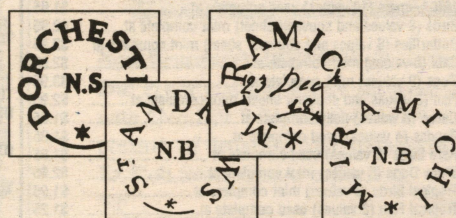


Figure 5: The Miramichi (21-24mm and 28mm), St. Andrews and Dorchester star handstamps.

Sept. 26, 1801, cover from Miramichi to Fredericton endorsed "Elean Thoma, Indian."

The New Brunswick legislature had been paying large amounts for the upkeep of the post roads but did not receive any of the postal revenues. A commission was empowered and their report was sent to London. On July 6, 1843, the New Brunswick Post Office became independent of that of Nova Scotia. In that period, and even later, much of the New Brunswick mail was carried on

ships across the Atlantic to Europe, through the Bay of Fundy to the United States or on its vast river systems (Figure 7).

In addition, because of its closeness to Prince Edward Island and Lower Canada, much of the mail landed at Halifax and destined to these provinces was routed through New Brunswick. Figure 8 shows an interesting missent cover from Aberdeen, Scotland (March 27, 1844) to Charlottetown, PEI. Before arriving at its destination it was routed

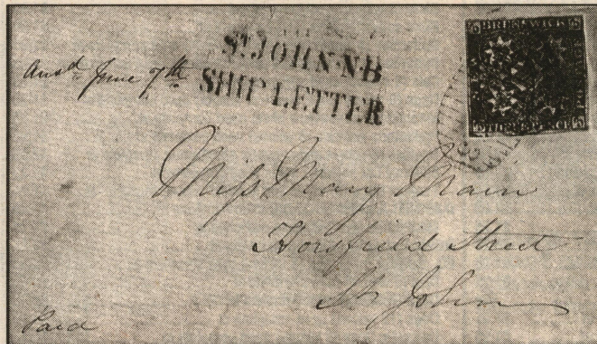


Figure 7: A rare example of a letter carried internally through the New Brunswick river system from Fredericton to St. John.

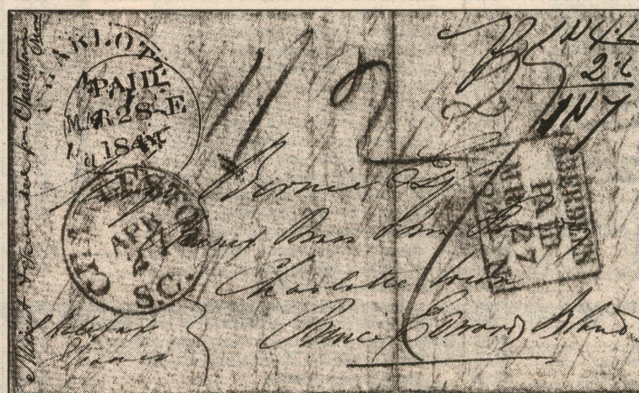


Figure 8: The most missent and/or misforwarded cover passing through New Brunswick on its way to Prince Edward Island.

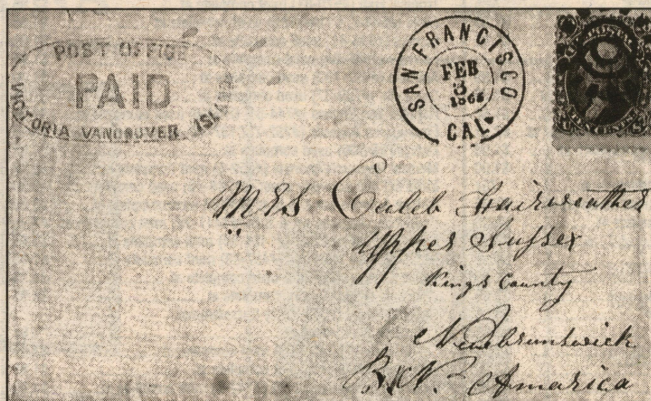


Figure 9: One of two pre-Confederation covers recorded from British Columbia to New Brunswick.

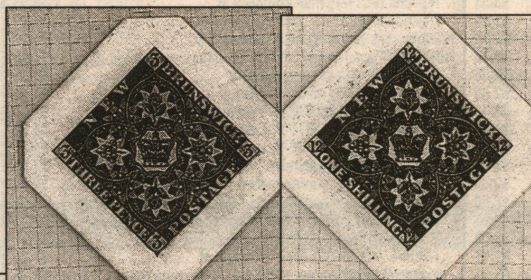


Figure 10: Die proofs of the 3d and 1/ New Brunswick Pence stamps. Only one completed set, including the 6d, is recorded. In addition, there are two other copies of the 3d and the 6d.

St. John, N. B.
July 7, '95

Figure 2: St. John straightline, the earliest recorded in New Brunswick.

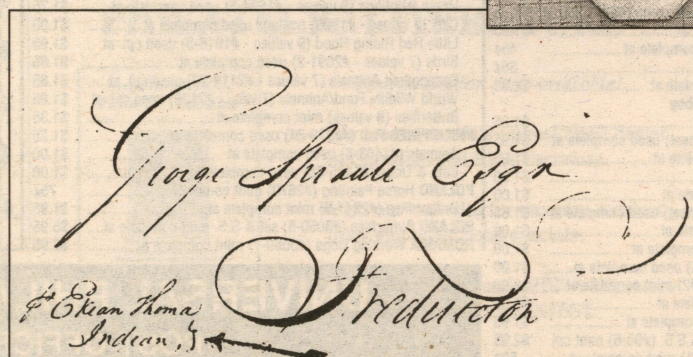


Figure 6: One of the few documented examples of mail being carried by Indian runner.

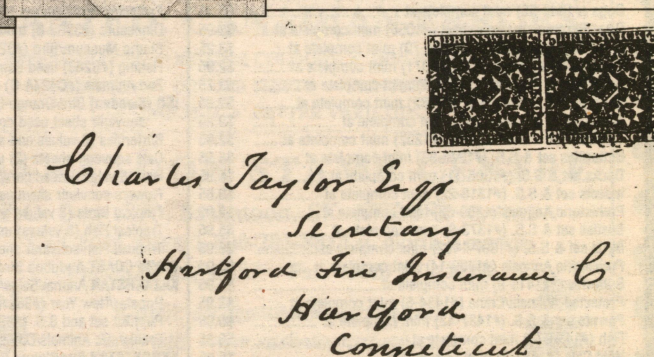


Figure 11: The earliest recorded use of the New Brunswick Pence Issue, Sept. 24, 1851.

to Charleston, S.C., (April 27) and misforwarded to Charlotte, Va., (May 4) and then Charlestown, Mass., (no date) before arriving safely in Charlottetown (May 22). A unique trip.

Figure 9 shows one of two pre-Confederation covers from British Columbia to New Brunswick prepaid in Victoria with the U.S. portion of the rate being confirmed by the addition of a 10-cent stamp affixed in San Francisco (Scott 62B or 68).

On April 6, 1851, New Brunswick, as well as Canada and Nova Scotia, took over the responsibility for their own postal affairs from the Colonial office in London and started issuing stamps. Three stamps with the same design, a 3d, 6d and one shilling were issued (New Brunswick Scott 1-4, Figure 10).

A cover in Saint's collection addressed to Hartford, Conn., dated Sept. 24, 1851, is the earliest recorded use of the Pence stamps (Figure 11). An interesting series of 39 handstamps first appeared in mid-1853. Numeral oval grids from 1 to 34 were issued alphabetically to post offices, except for St. John which received #1. Numbers 35 to 39 were issued when needed. Some of these hammers were reissued to different localities around the Confederation and one, #16-Penobsquis, previously in Harvey, has a 1958 note on the cover (Figure 12) that the grid "was returned over 10 years ago."

The popularity of these handstamps stem from their long life, their multiple venues and their difficulty of acquisition on covers dating from the Large and Small Queen periods of Canada. Saint has made an extensive study of these markings. Figure 13 shows one of the most spectacular numeral grid covers: a registered letter to Boston, Mass., bearing a pair of 6d. The use of a pair of 6d to pay the 1/ rate is much scarcer than those using the 1/ stamp. The St. Andrews numeral grid (#27) is one of two recorded on cover.

Bisects are a common occurrence in the Maritimes. On Aug. 1, 1854, the rate to the United Kingdom was reduced to 7-1/2d.; however, there was no stamp for that rate. Many 3d stamps were bisected and added to a pair of 3d or a 6d stamp to make up the rate. Thanks to an extensive surviving correspondence of more than 20 covers to a Miss Smith in England, collectors today have many of these bisects in their collections (Figure 14).

In 1859, the BNA provinces switched from the sterling monetary system to a decimal one. With this change came new stamps (1, 2, 5, 10, 12-1/2 and 17 cents, New Brunswick Scott 6-11) that were issued May 15, 1860 except for the 5-cent Queen Victoria which came out circa July 18, 1860 (Figure 15).

The reason for this late issue date was the infamous Connell stamp (New Brunswick Scott 5, Figure 16). The Connell story is well known. Suffice it to say that Charles Connell was Postmaster General of New Brunswick at the time the decimal stamps were issued and he had decided to have his picture on the 5-cent domestic letter rate stamp rather than the portrait of Queen Victoria. For this "act of lese-majesty" he had to resign and most of the stamps were destroyed. Once again the bisects came to the fore. From May 15 to July 18, many 10-cent stamps were bisected to pay the five-cent rate (Figure 17).

Although Ron Saint's New Brunswick Stampless, Pence and Cents 10-volume collection is being auctioned during the Millennium 2000 Stamp Show in Hamilton, Ontario, June 2-3, 2000, his devotion to the collecting and study of New Brunswick continues. He currently is studying thousands of town cancels to establish early and late dates of usage. He also has had an interest in many other aspects of New Brunswick philately. For example, Brigham Auctions recently auctioned his collection of New Brunswick first flight covers.

With specializing and micro-collecting and one-frame exhibits, we will not see another collector of J. Ron Saint's all-embracing approach to collecting a "country" for a while. His enthusiasm for his collection of New Brunswick is infectious, as anyone who speaks to him will attest.

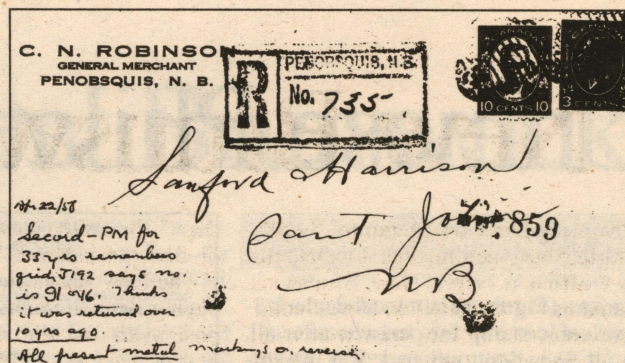


Figure 12: The numeral grid on cover with a 1958 note that the grid had been returned more than 10 years ago. On the back of the cover are examples of all the metal handstamps used at Penobsquis at that date. Definitely philatelic.

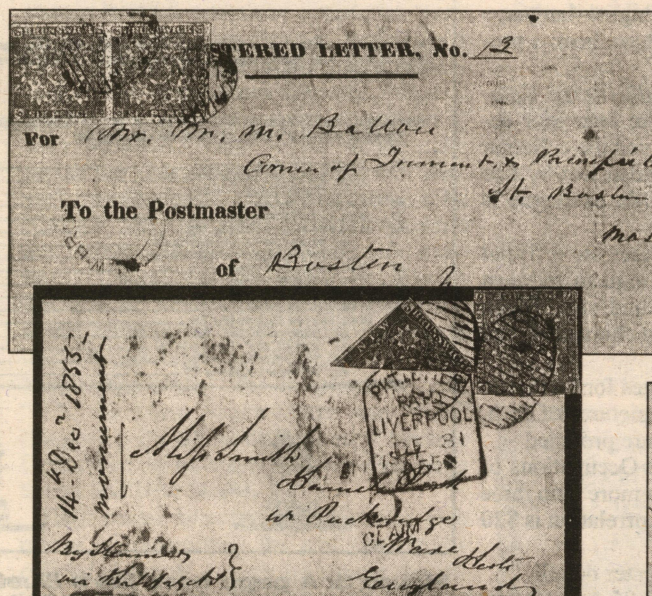


Figure 13: One of two covers recorded with the St. Andrews #27 grid and the only official registered cover recorded.

Figure 14: One of the many New Brunswick bisected covers from the Smith correspondence.



Figure 15: The largest New Brunswick franking of the Cents period: 95¢ paying the 5¢ domestic letter rate x 17 plus 10-cent registration fee. This part cover also bears the only known used block of four of the 12-1/2 cent.



Figure 16: An infamous Connell proof and stamp. Genuine Connells have ragged perforations that vary from 11.6 to 11.75.

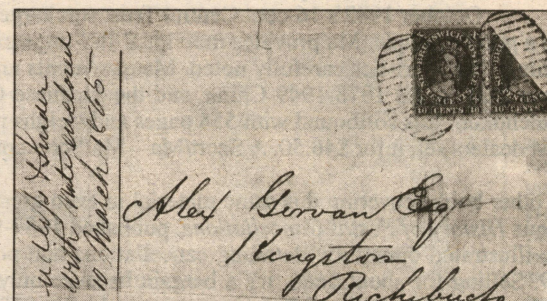


Figure 17: A bisected 10-cent used outside the Connell period, but legitimate nonetheless.

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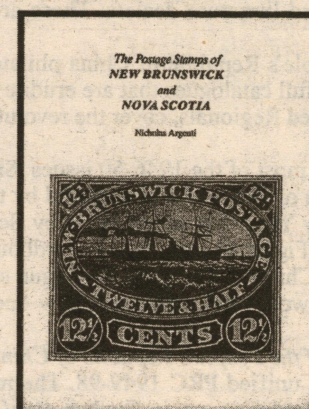
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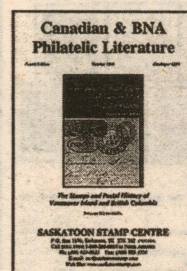
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