

OPINIONS & LETTERS

EDITORIAL

Ellis Essays of beaver at Capex '96

Your February 20, 1996 issue (Vol. 20, No. 20) arrived today and I am quite impressed with your special Capex '96 insert. Please keep up the good work.

I was particularly interested in Ian S. Robertson's article "Napkin Sketch" in the Capex '96 insert. Your readers might be interested to know that Sandford Flemings design was produced by lithography by James Ellis of Toronto. They are called the Ellis Essays. Up until the early 1930s none of these essays were believed to still be in existence. Since then, four have been documented and one more has been said to exist although that assertion has never been proven. Of the four known two are black and two are red/vermilion. Show goers at Capex '96 will be privileged to admire three of the four. A black copy and a red/vermilion copy will be on view in the Canadian Postal Archives display. The red/vermilion to be displayed is the one illustrated in Robertson's article. The third, also black, will be seen in one of the exhibits on the floor: The Lindemann Collection. For those who are interested in detail, the fourth copy (red/vermilion) is still in the possession of descendants of H. Borden Clarke, a dealer in rare books, to who it was gifted by

Sir Sandford Fleming's son in 1934. It is a spectacular piece as it is attached to a page from Sir Sandford's diary and as the text "Breakfast at hotel with Mr. Rutten & Hon. James Morris Post Master General. Designing stamps for him" in his own handwriting.

As Robertson reports, the lithographic process wasn't good enough for postage stamps in the 19th century. Therefore, the New York firm of Rawdon, Wright, Hatch and Edson was asked to engrave and produce the Fleming stamp. The existence of die proofs for the engraved design were not known until 1991. The American Bank Note Co. Sale of that year uncovered two (Lots 1501 & 1502) both in black. Again Capex '96 show goers will be able to admire these two unique pieces. The progressive die proof (Lot 1501) will be found in the Canadian Postal Archives display and the second, die proof, will be found in The Lindemann Collection. The story behind Canada's first stamp is fascinating. By the way Ian, does the "napkin sketch" still exist??

Charles Verge
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