

THE SIX PENNY PRINCE CONSORT Stamp of Canada's Pence Period

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In the early period of adhesive postage seeing only the head of state or numerals on a country's stamps was normal. Canada, when it issued its second stamp on May 17, 1851, continued to disregard this tradition. Its first stamp had shown a beaver and now it was the turn of Prince Albert, the Prince Consort of Queen Victoria, Queen of Canada — whose picture was to grace Canada's third stamp, the famous 12 penny black.

Prince Albert Francis Charles Augustus Emmanuel was the son of Ernest, Duke of Saxe-Cobourg and Gotha by Louise of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg and was born on Aug. 26, 1819, in Cobourg, Germany. He married Queen Victoria, after she proposed to him, on Feb. 10,



Figure 1: A portrait of Prince Albert (1819-1861) from a piece of Sèvres China by A. Ducluzeaux as exhibited in the Paris Exhibition by the French Government and engraved by D. Pound from a daguerreotype. One of many possibly looked at by Sandford Fleming when designing Canada's second stamp, the six penny.

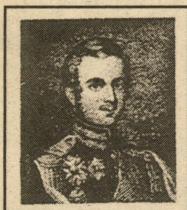


Figure 3: An engraving of Prince Albert by H. Virtue and Company of London, England.



Figure 2: This engraving of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria is from an unknown source. The original drawing on which Sandford Fleming's final design is based has not yet been found.



Figure 4: The unique hand stamped "SPECIMEN" on a blue-grey plate proof on India paper produced when the American Bank Note Co. was enlarged in 1879.

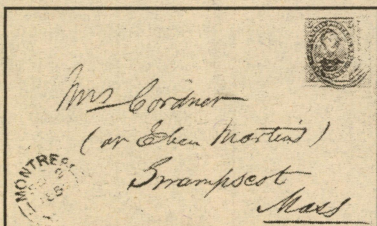


Figure 5: A grey violet example with imprint margin on right dated Sept. 2, 1857, predating Boggs' date of October-November 1857, for the rocking of the imprint on the plates. Canceled with a Montreal four-ring #21 obliterator and paying the letter rate to the United States. (ex - The Lindemann Collection)



Figure 6: One of two largest known multiples of the 6d on laid paper. (Courtesy The Brigham Collection)

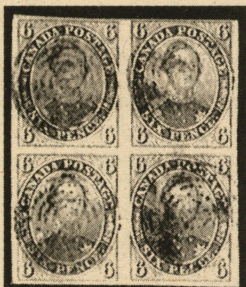


Figure 7: The largest known multiple on wove paper. A strip of three is the largest unused multiple reported. (Courtesy The Brigham Collection)

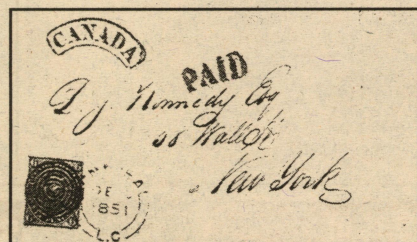


Figure 8: One of more than 200 covers bearing a 6d Prince Consort from the D. J. Kennedy hoard discovered in 1917 by Joseph Negreen. (Courtesy The Brigham Collection)

1840. He was made Prince Consort by Letters Patent on June 26, 1857, and died of typhoid at Windsor Castle on Dec. 14, 1861.

Although not commonly known, Sandford Fleming, in his famous Feb. 24, 1851, breakfast meeting with Postmaster General James Morris, was not only asked to design the three penny and one shilling beaver stamps but also the six penny.

Some good steel engravings of Prince Albert had recently come to Toronto and Fleming was so impressed by the work that he decided to copy one of the pictures and use it for the central theme of the six-penny stamp. The exact print on which Fleming based the design has not yet been found. However, Figures 1, 2 and 3 show examples of other contemporary prints Fleming may have looked at.

Contrary to the three-penny beaver, there was no controversy attached to the printing of this stamp. Alfred Jones engraved the design submitted by Fleming. Jones was mainly a bank note engraver who was born in Liverpool, England, on April 7, 1819. He arrived in the United States as a very young man and apprenticed to Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E) in 1834 first in Albany, N.Y., and then he moved with them to New York City.

Later, after starting his own business and upgrading his skills, he joined W. C. Smillie and Henry Earle to found the British American Bank Note Company in 1867. This company was to wrest the contract for printing Canadian stamps away from RWH&E in 1868. A taxicab accidentally killed Jones while he crossed the street in New York on April 18, 1900.

Although they were prepared, no die or plate proofs of this stamp have ever surfaced. Contemporary post office documents show that they ordered the stamp on March 27, 1851, and that RWH&E completed at least one die proof by April 23, 1851. The documents also state that plate proofs were sent to the Canadian Post Office in Ottawa on April 28, 1851.

Eminent students of Canadian proofs have queried the use of the plate proof designation used by Christie's Robson Lowe, lotters of the American Bank Note Archives sale (Sept. 13, 1990), for some of the six penny proof lots in that sale. They firmly believe that these were/are not plate proofs but trial color proofs that abound for this stamp.

The six-penny stamp and its cents counterpart probably have the largest number of shades of any Canadian stamp printed by RWH&E. Trial color proofs were pulled in blue black, blue, green grey, deep lilac and grey, all with a red vertical specimen overprint; a blue grey with a red diagonal specimen overprint; blue and blue grey with a green vertical specimen overprint; grey green, black and grey black with an orange vertical specimen overprint and finally a grey and a blue without a specimen overprint.

In addition, post contemporary plate proofs were pulled in red purple and red lilac in 1857 and in orange yellow in 1864. A second printing plate had been prepared earlier on, but not used. This was the plate used to pull these later proofs. In 1879, the National Bank Note Co., Ltd., the Continental Bank Note Co. and the American Bank Note Co. (previously RWH&E), all of New York, merged to become a larger American Bank Note Co. At that time proof impressions were made from plates on hand. It is from these that we owe the origin of the unique blue grey proof on India with hand stamped SPECIMEN measuring 12 x 2.5 mm. (Figure 4).

The six-penny stamps were printed in the same fashion and with the same papers as the three-penny beavers. They were first found on laid paper (1851-1855) then on hard stout opaque Ivy Mills handmade wove paper (1855-1857) and finally on Crane Mills' hard and soft machine made papers (1857-1859).

There were 100,400 laid paper stamps printed. They exist in shades varying from grey purple to slate violet.

Post Office records indicate that 320,078 of the wove paper stamps were received from the printers, of which approximately 52,000 were perforated in November or December 1858. Again, many colors and shades exist, ranging from greenish grey, slate grey, grey violet, brown violet and reddish purple. The perforated 12 was printed in both brown violet and grey violet inks. The many shades of the stamps result from the delicacy of the violet and purple tints used in the printing inks.

When collectors classify their six-penny stamps, they should be very careful to consider the fugitive properties of these inks. The printer's imprints in Diamond type upper and lowercase letters are found eight times on each sheet (twice on each side). They were originally reported by Winthrop S. Boggs to have been rocked onto the six-penny plates between October and December 1857. The imprint has now been found on a dated Sept. 2, 1857, cover that shows clearly the imprint on the right side of the stamp (Figure 5).

The principal reason for the issue of a six-penny stamp was to pay the first class rate to the United States — with the exception of the Pacific Coast where the rate was nine pence. In addition, it saw much use to pay the inland double letter rate and less use for the inland double weight money letter. All these rates were in effect on April 6, 1851. On April 19, of the same year, the Post Office announced a 6d book rate to the United States for packages of books, manuscripts and periodicals up to one-half pound.

There are some interesting facts for this stamp that may go against common belief. Pence issues are not known for their large multiples. The six penny is no different. The largest recorded unused multiple on laid paper is a pair (Figure 6). Two are reported to exist.

On wove paper, an unusual strip of three and a used block of four (Figure 7) are recorded. Legitimate private perforations do not exist for this issue. Only the official perf. 12 is recognized.

Bisects of the 6p, usually to pay the 3p letter rate, are not as rare as the corresponding bisects of the three-pence stamp. As well, they are not quite as important since postal patrons did not create them due to the impossibility of making a rate. The 3p bisect was used in combination with two 3p stamps to make the 7-1/2p rate before the issuance of that denomination.

The catalogue value of the six-penny stamp is commensurate with its rarity. The stamp on cover, though still expensive, is not rare. The reason is simply because, in 1917, Joseph Negreen found a hoard of correspondence addressed to a New York banker, D. J. Kennedy. In it there were more than 200 six-penny covers (Figure 8).

A list of Canadian philatelic periodicals is available by sending a SASE to the editor. ▼