

The Last Days of "G" Stamps ...

...a Cameo Appearance

On December 31st, 1963, after 40 years of use, the Government of Canada terminated the use of Official Stamps. The last such stamps were taken from the Cameo series issued in 1962 – 1963. Four stamps from the that series: the 1, 2, 4, and 5 cents were overprinted with a "G".

Designed by Ernest Roch these were the first horizontal format low value definitive set, as well as being the last Official stamps issued.

This exhibit explores four Cameo stamps overprinted with a "G" and their significant errors making them the rarest stamps in the Elizabethan period and amongst all Official Canadian Stamps.



1 cent brown Cameo G Overprint

The One Cent stamp has a crystal in the upper left-hand corner, symbolizing the Mining Industry. It was issued February 4, 1963 and withdrawn December 31, 1963

By the numbers:

Quantity printed without Overprint: 478,556,000

Quantity printed with G overprint: 1,149,700

Stamps were printed on sheets of 600, composed of six panels of 100 in a 2-panel wide by 3 panel high. All corner blocks are blank and have no plate number identification.



Matched set 1 cent brown Cameo blank plate blocks

1 cent Brown Cameo "G" overprint

Double "G"

In this variety the Overprinted "G" has been printed twice.



How does this happen? The Overprinting of the "G" was done by the Canada Bank Note Company, which had been contracted by the post office. In this case it is likely that a full sheet of 600 was fed through the printing process twice; a Second error was made when the usually very thorough inspectors missed the double printing.

When the stamps were overprinted the full sheet would have been sent to Canada Post, who would have sent some of the double printed stamps to various government offices throughout the country. In these offices the "error" would have been missed and some of the stamps would have been used for postage, and some would have remained. At the end of 1963 when the government stopped the use of "G" stamps, the remaining stamps would have been returned to Canada Post and destroyed. Some of the overprints would also have been sent to the Philatelic Agency and "inadvertently" sold to collectors and stamp dealers and that is when the "error" was discovered.

Quoting K. Bileski; "...They very likely got only 100 of these stamps...this pane of 100 would have been broken up...and would have been sold to Agency buyers..."

1 cent Brown Cameo “G” overprint

Double “G”

So...initially there would have been 600 stamps doubled printed, some went to government offices and were used and disposed of at the mailing destination; some were returned in December 1963 and subsequently destroyed by the Post office, some were sent to the Philatelic Agency, maybe 100, where they were sold to collectors or dealers as ordinary 1 cent brown Cameos.



Above is an enhanced and enlarged copy which shows more clearly the “**doubling of the G**”.

Quoting K. Bileski; “...They very likely got only 100 of these stamps...this pane of 100 would have been broken up...and would have been sold to Agency buyers...”

Clearly some would have missed this for it is now estimated that only 80 such “Double G” 1 cent brown stamps exist.

1 cent Brown Cameo "G" overprint...Unlisted Varieties



There is not significant evidence that this is a recurring error, it may just be errant ink



The following is an original note from K. Bileski attached to the above block of twelve

I consider this value the scarcest of all the final G stamps and the present cat. value is far too low. Nearly all the mint were destroyed in 1963 and very few if any were used. (Never could find any used 1¢, 2¢ and only a few 4¢ & 5¢ were sent in to me by collectors or dealers).

Here's a fine block of 12. The center stamps show an interesting constant plate variety: note the black lines across the face. Each is 300 times scarcer than normal.

His remark "Each is 300 times scarcer than normal" suggests that this black line shows up twice in each panel of 600

2 cent green Cameo G Overprint



The 2-cent green has a tree in the upper left corner, symbolizing the forestry industry and was the LAST overprinted "G" stamp issued and the LAST Official stamp issued. On January 1, 1964 the Government of Canada stopped using Official stamps for mailing purposes, bringing an end to 40 years of such stamps being issued by the Federal Government.

The 2-cent was issued May 2, 1963 and ended December 31, 1963, a short period of five months.

Number of stamps issued without OVERPRINT: 440,000,000

Number issued with "G" Overprint: 1,267,100

It went out with fireworks! With more errors than any other G, or OHMS overprint and with some of the most valuable of all Elizabethan stamps issued by Canada.

2 cent green Cameo G Overprint Missing G & Misplaced G's



Cameo stamps were printed on full sheets of 600, composed of 6 panes of 100 each. The full sheets were 2 panes wide and three panels deep.

How did this error happen?

The error is best described by K. Bileski:

“For some reason, a sheet to be printed was advanced about the width of a row of stamps. Down came the “G” plate and the result was most fascinating. The top row right across the big sheet, 20 stamps wide, failed to get any “G’s”(The **Missing G error**). All lower 9 rows of the top 2 panes got the “G” in quite a different place where they normally should be (**misplaced G**).

This brings us to the two centre panes in the big sheet (of 600, again 2 wide x 3 deep). There is almost a 10-centimeter gutter between the top and centre panes and this gutter immediately produced a new variety. Now the 2 vertical G's of the first two rows in the second pane were about 27 mm apart instead of 18 mm. Then follow 9 rows of misplaced G's Then one more gutter and the two bottom panes and the accumulated gutter spacings produce one more error, but it is the same as along the two top rows namely missing G's along the final two panes plus 9 more rows of misplaced G's"

[illegible]

Missing "G" Error on top pair in left margin block of 20
Only 8 corner blocks like this can exist.

2 cent green Cameo G Overprint Missing "G"

and Misplaced "G"

MATCHED SET of Blank corner blocks

Top corner block, Upper Left and Upper Right Show "Missing G"

While Lower Left and Lower Right Show "Misplaced G"



Only 8 blank corner blocks with this error exist.

A matched set of
upper left-misplaced G.
(last from the 2nd of 1963 dies)
Lower right to note from the
bottom of the 2nd of 1963 dies
and the 2nd of 1963 dies
Bileski circa 1963

Original note from K. Bileski About the Matched Set

2 cent Green Cameo Overprint



Misplaced G and Wide Spacing G

Two Corner blocks showing impact of the error

This corner Upper left Block is from one of the centre two panes of the full sheet.

All lower 9 rows of the top 2 panes got the "G" in quite a different place where they normally should be (misplaced G).

This brings us to the two centre panes in the big sheet (of 600, again 2 wide x 3 deep). There is almost a 10 centimeter gutter between the top and centre panes and this gutter immediately produced a new variety.

*The wide spacing G was seen in 1 of
center 200 group Bileski circa 1963*
*UK has never seen this and has no
reason to take it as a variety.*
*The lower 9 rows of the 200 group
Bileski has seen as false message.*

Original note from K. Bileski concerning the above block, c. 1963



This block, Lower Right is from one of the top panes of 100. The G's have been printed "upward" of normal placing. Compare to block of 20.

2 cent green Cameo G Overprint

Missing "G" and/or Wide Spaced "G"

Wide Spacing

Wide Spacing

Normal Spacing



Wide Spacing in
Top two pairs in a
Vertical block of 8
G is shifted UP
on other stamps

Wide Spacing in
top pair, other 2
are shifted UP

both blocks signed on back: K Bileski

2 cent green Cameo G Overprint... Misplaced "Gs"



Block of 10 shows normal position >>>>

These are not random and are not simply slight variations from normal placements of the "G". These are all from the same sheet of 600 as previously described.

How many are there? Well given that the sheet had 600 stamps, and then subtract the blocks of 4 or twenty that had the Missing G's along the top and bottom of the sheets...there could have been 500.

However the distribution or lack thereof by the Philatelic Bureau, and the subsequent destruction of remaining inventory in early 1964, leaves substantial doubt about the number that might exist...in 1963 K. Bileski said that no more than 50 could exist. But more recent information now suggests that 80 is a more realistic number.



2 cent green Cameo G Overprint

Blunt G variety



Upper Right Corner
Block of 40 with Blunt
“G” in position 39, see
arrow

Block of 9 with Blunt
“G”

Centre stamp

2 cent green Cameo G Overprint

Pawnbroker or Dotted G variety



The constant variety "Dotted G" (see centre stamp). This comes once on every 600 unit sheet so is 600 times scarcer than normal and as normals now retail at \$1.00 a copy (it's the best in the set) my price for the block is reasonable at



4 cent Red Cameo G Overprint

The 4 cent was has a “tower” in the upper left corner symbolizing hydro electricity and was issued February 4, 1963 and ended December 31, 1963...a short period of 11 months.

Number of stamps issued NO OVERPRINT: 1,452,000,000

Number issued WITH “G” Overprint: 920,000

The smallest number in the Cameo series



Matched set

With blank plate corners



5 cent Blue Cameo G Overprint



The 5 cent has a wheat sheaf in the upper left corner symbolizing agriculture and was issued October 3rd, 1962 and ended December 31, 1963...the first issue of the Cameos and the largest number printed of all Cameos

Number of stamps issued NO OVERPRINT: 1,489,000,000

Number issued WITH "G" Overprint: 1,334,000

Largest number of G overprinted

Five Cents was essentially the "basic" rate for domestic mail anywhere in Canada weighing up to 1 ounce, which explains the large print run for the 5 cent stamp

4 cent Red Cameo G Overprint...

... Blunt G

The Normal "G" has a serif, a small extension on the bar of the G...in the "Blunt" G variety that serif is missing. See blowup of block, the "Blunt" G is in lower left stamp



Blunt G misplaced

Cameo Used Stamps...

Cameo overprints were issued between October 3, 1962 and May 2, 1963 and were removed from service on December 31, 1963. Government departments were advised of the change to metered mail in the fall of 1963 and were required to return of all stamps. There is some evidence that some departments used small quantities after that date, however the Cameos were not in circulation long and as a result there are few used stamps.

Following are samples of used singles and blocks.



M.H. Stanbridge,
Apt 502, Canadiana,
60 Daly, Ottawa, Ont.

Note the date of April 30, 1965...this is clearly a "Contrived cover", but interesting nonetheless