

The FIRST DECIMAL ISSUE of CANADA 1859 - 68

Background: On July 1, 1859 the Colony of Canada introduced monetary reform and the decimal system was adopted, and with it, stamps valued in cents. Two of the new stamps for rates to the United Kingdom were denominated in both cents and sterling (12½¢ / 6d stg. and 17¢ / 8d stg.). Only the value and currency were changed. For the new stamps the colour and the vignettes of the existing Pence stamps were not to be altered, thus no essays or die proofs were made. The Dominion of Canada's Large Queen stamps replaced the First Decimal Issue on April 1, 1868.

Purpose: This collection of the second stamp issue of the Colony of Canada has been prepared to show the changes in the stamps in terms of shade and perforation resulting from the many printing orders over the nine years the issue was current. To this end, emphasis has been placed on the collection of dated copies. It will display: contemporary plate proofs, used stamps, constant plate varieties, imprints and usages. No trade sample proofs (compound die 12d & 10¢ and the so called imperforate stamps), or post contemporary proofs (Goodall proofs pulled in 1879), are shown as they played no part in the printing of the stamps.

Plate: Because of the decimal system a plate of 100 stamps set out 10 by 10 was used. One plate was prepared for each value but never hardened, so that the plates could be re-entered when necessary. The combination of small margins between the stamps and inaccurate early perforating machines resulted in well centered stamps being elusive.



Queen Victoria – Chalon portrait

Imprints: The printers had developed the habit of printing their name around the stamps at eight positions around the plate. In November 1864 every value was re-ordered and at that time the imprint was added to all but the 17 cents plate. The imprints exist in three types: Type I on the one cent, two cents and 12½ cents, Type II on the 5 cents and Type III on the 10 cents.

Papers: Whitworth stated, "All papers of this period were machine made, but as this was a new development, consistent thickness could not be maintained. Over the period of ten years of this issue variations in thickness and colour of paper can be found, but no particular thickness can be associated with a particular printing. All papers are of a wove nature with quite a strong mesh. Some are thin and white, but others are as thick as carton paper and yellowish."

Colour: The colour names for the stamps and proofs have been taken from the Stanley Gibbon's colour key #2530. Whitworth altered some of the colour descriptions of the one cent stamp from those given in his monograph to give a fuller description of the colour (Private correspondence with this exhibitor). Additionally in 1962 he published a revised description of the shades of green of the 12½ cents stamp in Maple Leaves. His new colour names for these two values have been used here.

Collection Highlights:

- Earliest recorded use of the 1¢ stamp, JY/06/1859.
- Stamp perforated 11.8 X 12.1, sixteenth printing of the 1¢ stamp
- Stamps perforated 11.8 X 11.9, 19th printing of the 1¢ stamp, 2nd printing of the 2¢ stamp and part of the 6th printing of the 2¢ stamp.
- Two distinct shades of the 2¢ green plate proof.
- Reassignment of the 2¢ Carmine-red stamp from printing two to printing 1B
- Identification of 2¢ printing 2 as Brown-lake.
- Identification of 2¢ printing 3 as Carmine-lake.
- Example of the double log in the waterfall flaw of the 5¢ stamp.
- Discovery copy of 10¢ printing 15C Pale red-brown.
- Discovery copy of 10¢ printing 18A Bright maroon perforated 11.9 X 11.8.
- A copy from each Plate State of the 12½¢ stamp both Major re-entries; plate positions 61 & 94.
- A copy of the elusive 'Burr over shoulder' plate variety on the 17¢ stamp.

Exhibit Plan

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| 17 - 21 | Two Cents |
| 22 - 32 | Five Cents |
| 33 - 48 | Ten Cents |
| 49 - 58 | 12½ Cents |
| 59 - 64 | 17 Cents |