

Canada

THE TWELVE-PENNY BLACK

On 6 April, 1851 Great Britain transferred the responsibility for the operation of the Post Office to the Province of Canada. Canada's first postage stamp was issued shortly thereafter, on 23 April, 1851. It was a red three-penny stamp designed by Sir Sandford Fleming of Toronto for the Postmaster General, the Hon. James Morris, and depicted a beaver in its natural environment. The second denomination, a six-penny stamp printed in slate-violet, was distributed to post offices sometime between 2 and 17 May, 1851. This stamp depicts a vignette of Albert, the Prince Consort, from an engraving by W.H. Egleton after a portrait drawn by W. Drummond. The highest denomination in this series was a Twelve-Penny stamp issued on 14 June, 1851.

All stamps were engraved by Alfred Jones (1819-1900), an accomplished British portrait engraver. All sources agree that of the total printing of 51,000 stamps, 1,510 were distributed to postmasters throughout the Province of Canada and of these, sixty were returned by the postmaster at Ingersoll, Ontario. The stamp was printed in sheets of 200, arranged in two panes, each having 10 rows of 10 subjects. From Post Office records it is known that the Twelve-Penny stamp was available for use until 4 December, 1854 when it was withdrawn from sale. On 1 May, 1857 the remaining stocks of this stamp were destroyed in accordance with Post Office procedure.

In 1851 Canadian Post Office authorities believed there were firms in Canada capable of producing the high quality engraving which was required for postage stamps. Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson of New York City, had gained a reputation as security printers of high quality banknotes and postage stamps. This firm, together with several others, formed the American Bank Note Company in 1858. Prior to being awarded the contract to print Canada's first stamps, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson had established an agency in Canada and had undertaken work for a number of private banks. No doubt this factor was taken into consideration when the Hon. James Morris (Postmaster General 1851-1853) awarded the contract to the New York firm.

In the matter of choosing the designs for Canada's first stamps, the postal administration for the Province of Canada sought to demonstrate a measure of independence from Great Britain. It appears certain that, for a short time, consideration was given to use only the beaver design prepared by Sandford Fleming. The existence of a one shilling essay containing Fleming's design would appear to substantiate this theory. Post Office authorities, however, eventually adopted the policy that all letters addressed to foreign destinations should bear the effigy of the sovereign. As the Twenty-Penny stamp was expected to primarily

serve this purpose, it was decided that the most suitable likeness of Her Majesty Queen Victoria would be used. The beaver design was retained for the three-penny stamps, which was the rate for internal mail.

The vignette for the Twelve-Penny stamp was taken from the portrait of Queen Victoria in her Robes of State, painted in 1837 by Alfred Chalon, R.A. (1781-1860). * The painting was presented by Her Majesty to her mother, the Duchess of Kent, as a memento of the Queen's first visit to the House of Lords on 17 July, 1837. The Chalon portrait was the basis for many postage stamps issued by the British Colonies, notably New Zealand. Canada also utilized this vignette for two other postage stamps—the 7½-pence, issued in 1857 and the 12½-cent, issued in 1859—as did the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

“Twelve Pence” was used to identify the value of the stamp rather than “One Shilling”, to avoid confusion between the monetary values of British Sterling and Colonial currency.

The Postal Museum is fortunate in having an original 24" x 36" engraving after the Chalon portrait. This rare engraving was formerly in the collection of Mr. Gerald E. Wellburn of Victoria, B.C., a prominent Canadian postal historian and charter member of the Postal Museum Advisory Committee. The engraving is the work of Samuel Cousins, A.R.A., and was published on 28 June, 1838 by Francis Graham Moon of London, England. Mr. Wellburn presented the engraving to the Postal Museum in 1975.

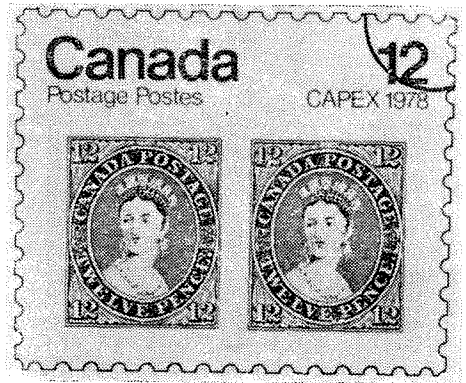
The “Bank Note Companies” in Canada and the United States place great importance on their engravings, since they were used many times for various purposes. Correspondence between the Canada Post Office and the printers in New York suggests the design for the Twelve-Penny stamp was prepared in Canada and taken personally by the Postmaster General to New York. The engraving was done by Alfred Jones under the direction of James Parsons Major, a script engraver and designer, and head of the engraving department at Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson.

The Twelve-Penny stamps do not bear the Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson imprint. Imprints did not appear on the sheet margins of Canadian stamps until 1852. When the first and only consignment of Twelve-Penny stamps reached Toronto in May 1851, problems became apparent. An exceedingly thin grade of transparent laid paper had been used by the printers, which brought criticism from the Postmaster General. A theory to explain this would be the company's use of an existing supply of paper which was not normally used for postage stamp printing purposes. The paper used for the “pence” stamps was manufactured by the Ivy Mills of Chester, Pa., a company noted for its quality banknote papers. It seems quite possible that the laid paper printings were in fact printed on a type of banknote paper.

Thirty-five die and plate proofs are known to exist for the Twelve-Penny stamp. This figure includes the contemporary plate proofs and the composite die proofs that were made from 1859 to 1878. Some authorities claim that the last printing of composite die proofs was probably authorized in 1878 by A.C. Goodall, President, American Bank Note Co.

Based on reliable authority, it is believed that there are between 100 and 145 of the Twelve-Penny stamps, both mint and used, in existence. The same source suggests the following quantities exist:

- (1) 5 mint pairs
- (2) 50 mint singles
- (3) 3 to 5 covers
- (4) 2 used pairs
- (5) 75 used singles



Pair of the 12-Penny Q.V. of 1851
 featured on special stamp (18.1.78)
 heralding "CAPEX 78"

Why the stamp saw such limited use has been discussed among philatelists for many years. The consensus is that it prepaid seldom used rates such as the following: 12d per ounce to Newfoundland and the British West Indies via Halifax and Liverpool; double weight letters to the United States; quadruple-rate domestic letters. The sale of so few Twelve-Penny stamps during the period of its availability, must have been a matter of some concern to Post Office authorities, and the reason for its unpopularity may therefore be only part of the story. Some other significant reason may yet be uncovered to clarify this explanation further.

In his Epilogue to the Provincial Issues on page 216 of Vol. 1 Boggs states that in 1902, "The various dies and plates (of both the pence issues and the decimal currency issues of 1859) were cut apart and thrown into a river some miles from Ottawa, after having been lying in the vaults of the Department for years." There is no evidence that this occurred. The Twelve-Penny plate that was sent to Canada on 26 March, 1857 was not destroyed, since it is now on display at the National Postal Museum.

In 1963 Post Office officials attending the annual convention and exhibition of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada in Windsor, Ontario, surprised those assembled by bringing a sealed box to the banquet. When this box was opened during the dinner, all were astonished to see that it contained defaced

printing plates of early postage stamps of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, including the plate for the Twelve-Penny stamp. It is interesting to note that the name "J. Garside, N.J." is stamped into the metal on the reverse side of the plate. Perhaps this is the name of the supplier of the original steel plate.

* THE CHARLON PORTRAIT

In 1837, on the occasion of the Queen Victoria's first visit to the House of Lords after her succession to the throne, Her Majesty stood at the front of the grand staircase while Alfred Chalon, R.A. painted a sketch of the young Queen in her Robes of state. From this sketch Chalon made three copies of the portrait which was to become the most famous royal portrait in the world. The first of these copies was given by the Queen to her mother, the Duchess of Kent, who who later presented it to her son-in-law, the Prince Consort.

At the time of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1897, the original portrait was on view but since that time all record of the whereabouts has been lost.

The two other copies painted by Chalon were given by Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia and to the King of Portugal. It is believed that the first of these was destroyed by the R.A.F. during the last war, but the copy of the King of Portugal found its way back to Great Britain when his successor, King Manuel, abdicated in 1910, and is now in the collection of Robson Lowe of London.

The American engravers, Rawdon, Wright and Hatch (Later Rawdon Wright, Hatch and Edson, and subsequently the American Bank Note Company) produced a small engraving after the Chalon portrait for the Royal Wedding Celebrations in 1840. The portrait also appeared on several bank notes in North America from 1849-1870 and the first adhesive postage stamp to bear the Chalon portrait was the famous Canadian Twelve Pence in black which was issued on the 14th June 1851, having been engraved by Alfred Jones for Rawdon, Wright, Hatch and Edson of New York.

In all, the design of the Queen's Head after Chalon appeared on some three hundred different postage stamps issued in eleven British Dominions and Colonies. Of these, 87 were issued by Queensland, 56 by New Zealand and 46 by Tasmania. No other informal portrait of a monarch has ever achieved such popularity, for it was through this medium that the peoples of the British Empire learned the likeness of their monarch.

For the record, the original Chalon painting of this historic portrait was on Display in the Court of Honour of CAPEX 78, the International Philatelic Exhibition held in Canada between June 9-18, 1978. The painting was on display with the kind permission of Robson Lowe, the owners, and it is the first time it was exhibited at an international philatelic exhibition.