

The 12½¢ and 17¢ STAMPS of 1859

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. For the new stamps the colour and vignette of the existing Pence stamps were not to be altered, thus no essays or die proofs were made, only the value and currency were changed. The 12½ cents (6d Sterling) Queen Victoria stamp replaced the 7½ pence currency (6d Sterling) Queen Victoria stamp and was itself replaced by the 12½ cents large Queen on April 1, 1868 while the 17 cents (8d Sterling) Jacques Cartier stamp replaced the 10 pence currency (8d Sterling) Jacques Cartier stamp and was replaced by the 15 cents large Queen. (The rate to Britain via the US had been reduced from 17¢ to 15¢ about January 16, 1868).

Plate: Because of the decimal system, plates of 100 stamps set out 10 X 10 were used. One plate was prepared for each value but never hardened, so the plates could be re-entered when necessary, and in fact the 12½ cents plate was re-entered once but the 17 cents plate was never re-entered. The combination of small margins between the stamps and inaccurate early perforating machines resulted in well centered stamps being elusive.

Imprints: The printers had developed the habit of printing their name around the stamps at eight positions. In November 1864 the imprint was added to the 12½ cents plate and is found in two places on each margin. They read normal on the North and South margins, up on the West and down on the East margin. However the Imprint was never added to the 17 cents plate.

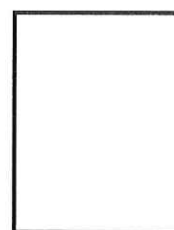
Papers: All papers of this period were machine made, but as this was a new development, consistent thickness was not maintained. Over the period of these stamps variations in thickness and colour of paper can be found, but no particular thickness can be associated with a particular printing. All papers are of a wove nature with quite a /

Purpose: This collection of the 12½ cents Queen Victoria and 17¢ Jacques Cartier stamps has been prepared to display: contemporary plate proofs, used stamps, constant plate varieties and imprints. Emphasis has been placed on the changes in shade and perforation resulting from the numerous printings. No trade sample proofs (the so-called imperforate stamps), or post contemporary proofs (pulled after AP 1, 1868), are shown as they played no part in the printing of the stamps.

PLATE PROOFS IN COLOUR OF ISSUE

ORIGINAL PENCE VALUES

DECIMAL VALUES ISSUED JULY 1, 1859



Synopsis: The 12½ & 17 Cents Stamps of 1859

This is a used stamp collection. A used stamp has done its postal duty and then becomes collectable. You will not find here large multiples of stamps nor covers to exotic locations.

Die proofs: Whitworth states "No contemporary die proofs are known... In 1878 a re-organization of the printers took place and Albert G. Goodall was elected President and it is believed that in 1879 he ordered proofs to be made of all dies and plates for record purposes. Some of these eventually came into the hands of collectors. The Essay-Proof Society records the following values, all printed in five colours, black, brown, red, green and blue. The 1 cent as a die proof with a cross hatched background and the 2, 5, 10, 12½ and 17 cents as full sheets of stamps." Some person has removed some of the 2 to 17 cents proofs from their original card and remounted them on larger card to market them as die proofs, see Firby auction of January 24, 2004.

Perforations: Whitworth noted that there were four perforating machines used on this issue; 11.7, 11.8, 11.9 and 12.1 then he lumped 11.7 and 11.8 together as 11¾ and 11.9 and 12.1 together as 12. This collection separates 11¾ into 11.7 and 11.8 and 12 into 11.9 and 12.1 the better to assist collectors to identify individual printings. Although most people think that in the compound perforation era all stamps with the long axis vertical will be perforated 11.9 or 12.1 X 11.8 this exhibit will show four exceptions to this rule.

Twelve and one half cents stamp:

- This collection will show a copy from each Plate State of both Major re-entries: plate positions 61 and 64.
- Whitworth did not mention a Major re-entry at position 62 although this has been a feature of Unitrade for at least twenty years showing 18vii as at both position 61 and 62. This collector is of the view that this is an error and that the Major re-entry does not exist at position 62.
- This collection will show a copy of the stitch watermark.

Seventeen cents stamp:

- This collection will show a copy of the elusive 'Burr over shoulder variety'.
- This collection will show a copy of the stitch watermark which is unlisted for the 17 cents value.

The pale blue plate proof of the 17 cents stamp: This proof shows the 'Burr over shoulder flaw at plate position No. 7. Whitworth stated "...it is probable that these were printed at the commencement of the 11th order of December 1866". Since the Burr over shoulder" flaw has only been observed on the 11th and 12th printings, this collector is of the view that Whitworth was right and that these proofs are contemporary. However since the plate was not destroyed until 1902 it is possible that they are post contemporary.

Number of printings of the 17 cents stamp: A thorough literature search has shown that there were only twelve printings of the 17 cents stamp. See Whitworth, the First Decimal Issue of Canada pages 13 and 14 and Boggs The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada Vol. II page 3-J.

Bibliography:

- Calder, Senator J. A., Some Phases of the Canada '59 Issue, reprinted from the London Philatelist, 11 May, 1939
- Calder, Senator J. A., 17¢ Canada 1859, The Stamp Specialist – Red Book, H. L. Lindquist, New York, 1942
- Boggs, Winthrop S., The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada, Chambers Publishing Co., Kalamazoo, MI, USA, 1945.
- Allen, J. Miller, Some Aspects of the Canada 1859 Issue. Maple Leaves, Vol. 6, No. 7 to 10, December 1956.
- Whitworth, Geoffrey, Some Features of the First North American Perforating Machines. Maple Leaves, Vol. VII, No. 2 to 4, Feb. 1958.
- Whitworth, Geoffrey, The First Decimal Issue of Canada, 1859-68. The Royal Philatelic Society, London. 1966.
- Whitworth, Geoffrey, The Printings of the 12½¢ Cents Value, Maple Leaves, Vol XVIII, June 1982.
- Boggs, Winthrop S., Early American Perforating Machines and Perforations, Unitrade reprint, June 1882.
- Thompson, Richard, The 1859 Cents Issue (Part 2), Maple Leaves, Vol. XXX, No. 5, April 2008.