

PERKINS BACON & COMPANY

Their Trade Samples and Other Mysteries



Perkins Bacon Trade Samples



This presentation was originally developed as a slide program by Robert H. Pratt and has been adapted into PowerPoint format by Clarence A. Stillions.

Robert H. Pratt

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The research and collecting of the information for this program began in the early 1960s. This is when Robert Pratt's interest in Newfoundland philately and its postal history began. He was initially intrigued by the works of Perkins Bacon and their beautifully prepared and executed first issues of postage stamps.

He fell prey, as did others, to the blandishments of certain stamp purveyors and thus became aware of the existence of what was then, as now, often called "Reprinted Die Proofs". He determined to learn more about them and by 1968 had accumulated enough information with the help of one of the members of the Royal Philatelic Society, London, Dr. Bill Stone, to prepare and publish in the *American Philatelist* a paper titled "A Preliminary Report on the Perkins Bacon Trade Sample Sheets of 1902 and Later".

Since then, from time to time, a few important pieces were added to the collection and some of the mysteries were solved. The next-to-final examples seem to have been in hiding in the vaults of Harry Nissen, and were only released when material came onto the market en mass.

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The last and most interesting pieces came quite by chance as a result of his talk at the Royal of London in May 1983.

A lengthy letter from Mr. Charles Hunt introduced Mrs. Sylvia J. Heath, wife of a descendant of the Perkins Bacon Heath's. This fortuitous introduction resulted in the disclosure of some 20 pages of vital information concerning the Trade Sample Sheets, previously unrecorded. They are the outcome of the Rev. Raymond A. D. Heath's retention of certain documents relating to the trade samples. He was believed to be a member of the firm of Perkins Bacon from about 1920 to 1935 and was a contemporary and nephew of James Dunbar Heath, the last Managing Director.

The items shed light on the dates of production of the plates, and on the method of their defacement.

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It should be pointed out that dates that were originally arrived at by deduction and the writings of others have been updated by the new information and appear to be more accurate.

The facts about the papers have been derived by seeing examples and measuring them, and again by the observations of others. Colors also have been seen in the writings of other researchers or collectors.

What you will see in the following slides are the results of some 20 years of collecting the memorabilia of Perkins Bacon and the exquisite engravings they brought forth. They are an art form the likes of which will not be produced again.

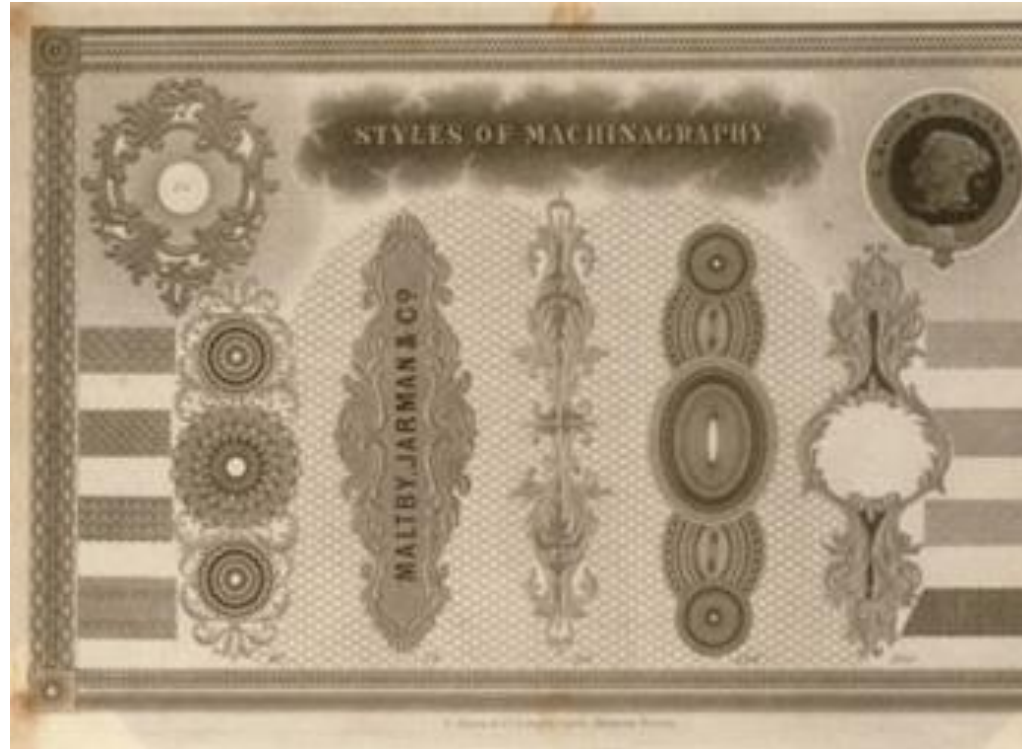
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This presentation begins by:

- Delving into a few mysteries
- Looking at the Perkins Bacon trade samples generally
- Looking at Newfoundland trade samples specifically

It concludes by looking at some of the neatest philatelic banquet menus ever produced.

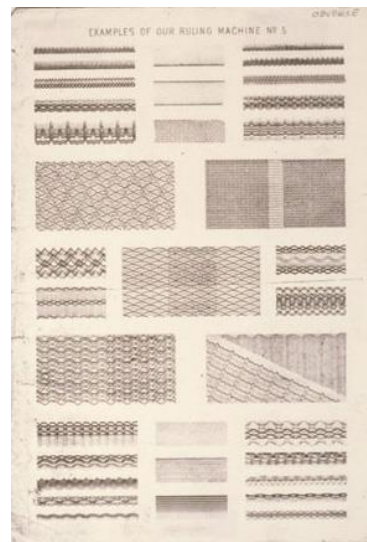
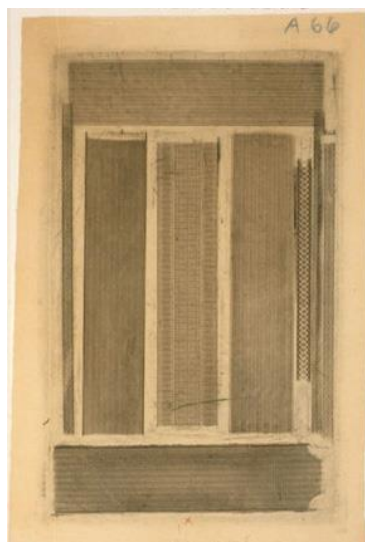
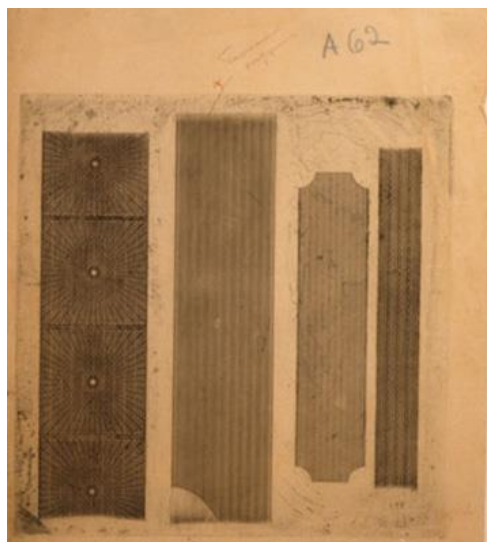
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We begin with what was a mystery. Here is an engraved print, titled “STYLES OF MACHINAGRAPHY” which appears very much like other sheets prepared by Perkins Bacon. Yet, at the bottom of the sheet is the legend “E. Bacon & Co., 3 Angel Court, Skinner Street”.

It has been determined that this was a forbearer of Perkins Bacon & Co. and thus the mystery was solved.

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Here are four pages containing prints full of background material. The first two are identified by the Perkins Bacon numbers A62 and A66. The roller numbers that contain the engravings are noted above each item.

This kind of material was mostly used as border designs or backgrounds for stamps and banknotes. The pages containing “Examples of Our Ruling Machine No. 5” are marked “Mr. Raymond - Perkins Bacon & Co”, and were evidently used by Raymond A. D. Heath as examples of the firm’s handiwork.

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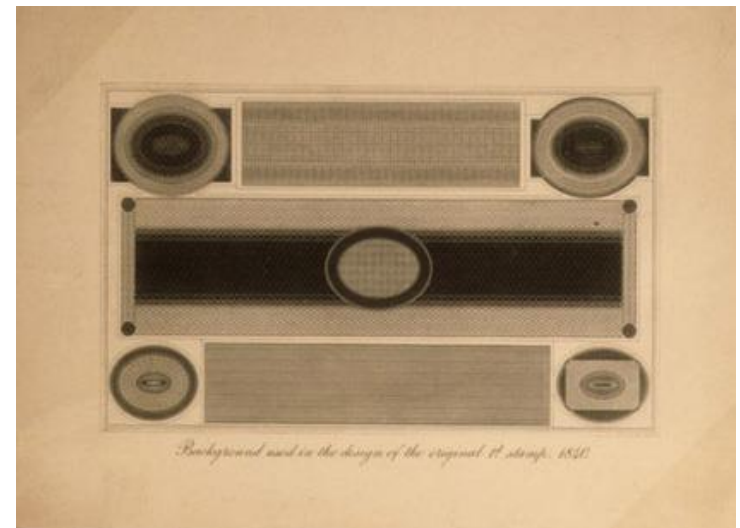
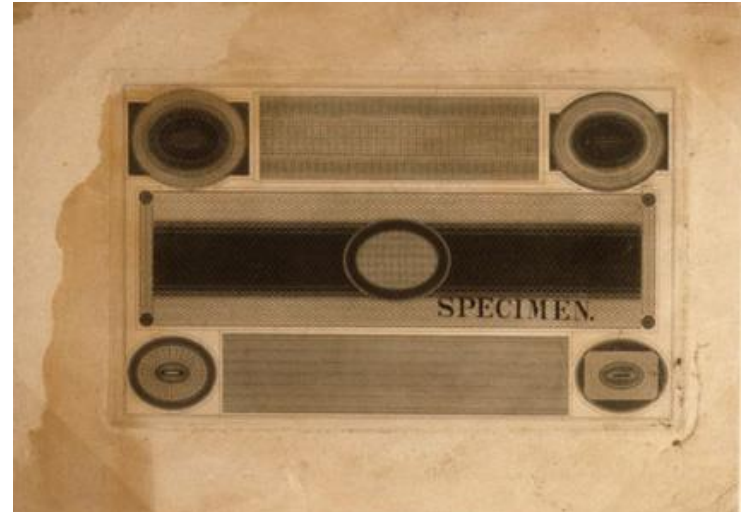
An intriguing advertising piece, plugging “ROWLANDS Macassar Oil, price 3d”, labeled “a treatise on the hair with directions enclosed”, sports designs that were and could have been used on stamps. The circular stars in the area below the price are the ones used in the New Brunswick and Newfoundland stamp designs.

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Then there is the Geometric lathe work that appeared in Sir Edward Bacon's book on the Proofs & Essays of Great Britain.

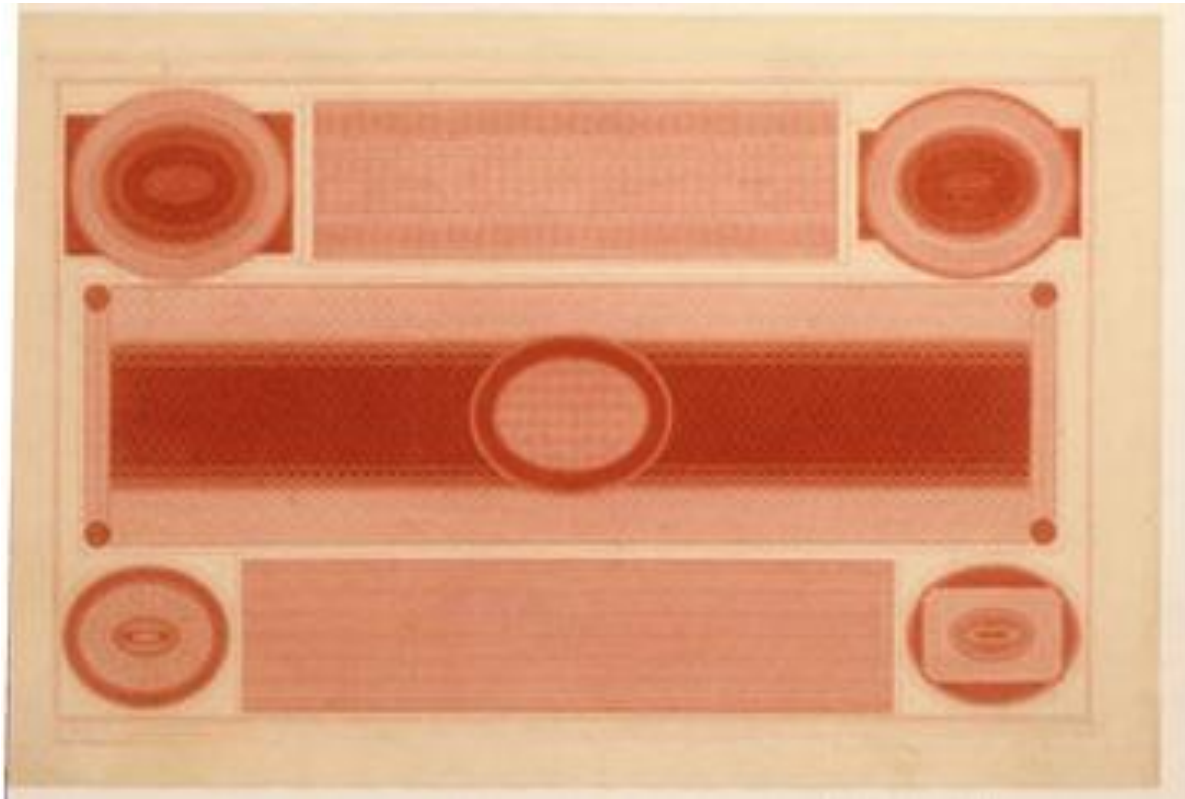
The top image is an example overprinted SPECIMEN. The bottom one is an example titled "Background used in the design of the original 1d stamp, 1840" with a very faint inverted 3 in the lower left corner.

The 1840 1d stamp was engraved by Charles Frederick Heath, an early member of the Perkins Bacon firm and the illegitimate son of James Heath.



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Then finally, there is a reproduction in brilliant red which probably was removed from Sir Edward's book. The first and last are printed on 0.005 inch thick yellowish paper, while the middle design is on heavy stock.



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Here are montages of various postage stamps, arranged in overlapping and intersection designs. One is a printing from a plate made from such an arrangement and the other a mockup in preparation of making a plate. There are proof designs from Tasmania, Queensland, New Zealand, New South Wales and the Foreign Bill stamp. Most bear the Chalon portrait of Queen Victoria.

Why would Perkins Bacon prepare this plate? The next slide will tell.



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Here is a “bond like” preparation which, for the first time, lists a telephone number, 1472HOP, and telegrams, PERKALINE, LONDON, buried for the moment behind the fold. On the obverse in blue crayon is the script OLD CALENDAR. The stamp montage was evidently for the purpose of listing the countries for whom the Company had prepared postage stamps, in other words, their customers. It was probably prepared sometime after 1900.

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Another montage appears, this one after removal of the firm from 69 Fleet Street to 58A Greys Inn Lane. Queen Victoria in various vignettes forms the theme of the four co-existent designs. This again is a mockup and it was reduced to a plate as can be seen on the next several slides.

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This item is most interesting. Some authorities believed it to be a book marker while Robert Pratt felt that it was a playing card wrapper.

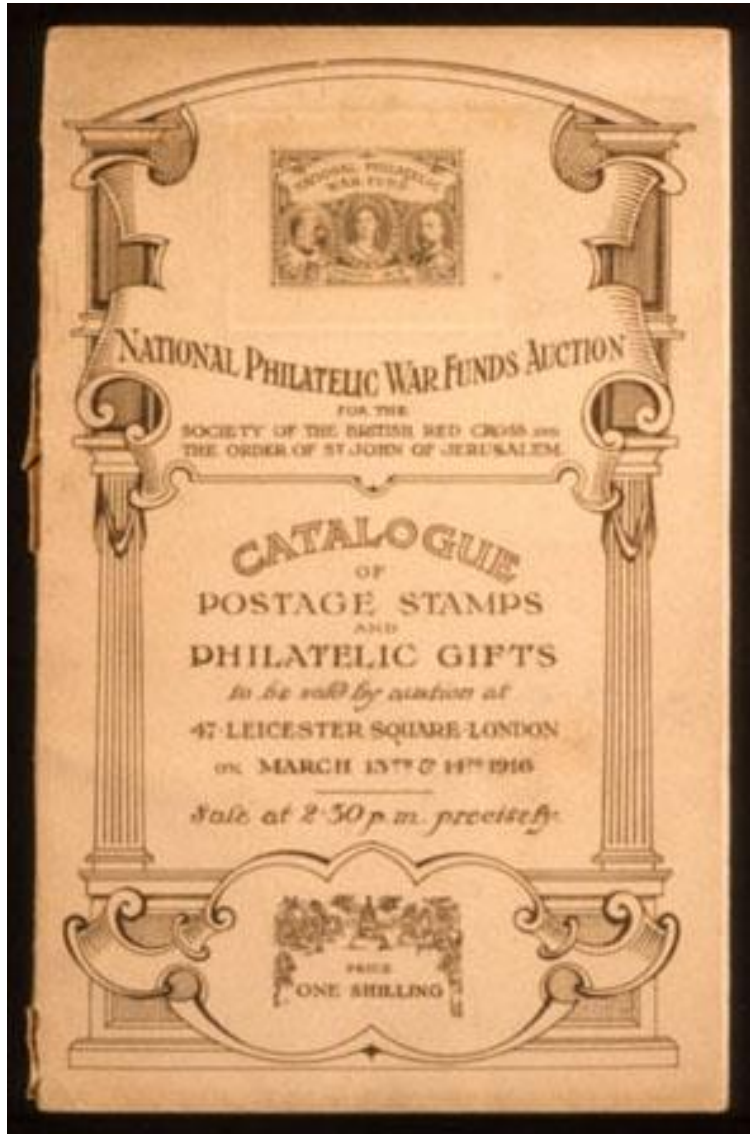


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This was found on the back outside cover of the philatelic auction catalogue for the National Philatelic War Funds Auction on May 15, 1916.



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James Dunbar Heath was a member of the executive committee made up of prominent philatelists to raise money for the Red Cross. He was also Vice-president of the Herts Philatelic Society and we will see what he did for them later.

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So far we have established several important criteria. A method of preparing a die for postage stamps has been developed and the fact that Perkins Bacon often utilized the results of their endeavors to produce promotional literature is evident.

Who can blame them? With a process that at the time defied copying or forging and with their expertise in its use, the product itself would be the best promotional material available.

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The Perkins Bacon trade sample plates were many! They were initiated, according to Managing Director Heath, about 1902, and continued to be produced until at least 1931. They were beautiful and sometimes dangerous as they contained out-of-date but still viable stamps in original colors, but not necessarily on original papers. Some were based on unused essays or damaged and/or re-entered stamp rollers which could not produce a usable stamp. But all had a common start: they were prepared from previously made rollers, impressed in a plate.

With a few exceptions the trade samples were not printed directly from the original die, and thus cannot accurately called “Reprinted Die Proofs”. Why does one reprint a die proof? Die proofs were never supposed to be printed in quantity, and were only intended for the use of the engraver in progressively viewing or later in improving his work or for the eventual approval of the manager or customer. Reprinting would obviously be for some reason not generally considered necessary.

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The following slides contain some of the many trade sample sheets. Initially the pages will contain examples from plates containing duties other than Newfoundland. Following these examples will be the Newfoundland plates and printings which are as complete as possible, and then a selection of special printings created for the Herts Programs which seemingly initiated the trade sample sheets.

Newfoundland was the country Robert Pratt was most interested in, and it was the catalyst that spurred his investigation. One of the mysteries still unsolved is an accurate count of the number of reproductions of any one plate in any one color on any one paper.

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The first of six valuable prints of trade sample sheets received from Mr. Raymond is shown here. This indicates that the basic assumption that Plate 13 was one of the early plates is correct. The exact date when it was laid down by Mr. Fisher is not recorded. The rollers from which the impressions were taken are indicated, as is the country for which the vignette was engraved. The plate was evidently kept in the safe and was probably marked by the penciled 2 in the upper right corner. Then next to Plate X, which we will meet later, was a very early entrant. As this pull was made in 1929 it does not represent the way in which it was initially laid down, but it indicates that the plate was destroyed 27 May 1931.

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This plate is what Robert Pratt chose to call Plate 13, as it had thirteen rollers impressed into it. According to James Heath, it was printed in 1902, most probably on 5 different papers or board, in 1 to 12 different colors. It also has been identified on two papers printed in 1919 in from 3 to 8 colors and again in 1929 on 2 different papers in from 3 to 8 colors. This plate has many children.



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Here are examples of single duties cut from the various colors and printings.



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Next, and also initiated in 1902, is the 3 Ceylon plate. This was prepared on four different papers in from 1 to 12 colors. It was reproduced again in 1929 on one paper and in three colors.

The lower example is on thick board and is believed to be from the earliest production.



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The single impression of the octagonal Ceylon die is on 1919 paper.



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These impressions are on the earliest paper in a portion of the 12 colors.

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This slide is another example from the Heath collection. On it are two plates, the 3 Ceylon, marked sheet 5, with a Perkins Bacon inscription from 1929 and an example of the Ceylon Cape of Good Hope plate, marked sheet 3. Both are noted "safe" which would indicate an early existence. They both were destroyed 27 May 1931, a common date now for all of these plates. The date of the Ceylon die is stated as 27 August 1908.



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The Barbados 3 Plate was a 1902 entrant printed on coarse board 0.02 inch thick, in three or four colors. Seemingly this was the only printing, thus it is scarce.

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One of the most interesting plates is the Foreign Bill Stamp plate, which exists in progressive form. Three states are known, and are shown herewith. The first state on board is from the 1902 printings, the second state, with several vignettes and scratches added, is from the 1919 printings, while the third state, now cleared of scratches, comes from the 1929 editions. It is apparent that early on nothing was destroyed or thrown away at Perkins Bacon. The vignettes on this plate appear again in other forms on some of the other plates.



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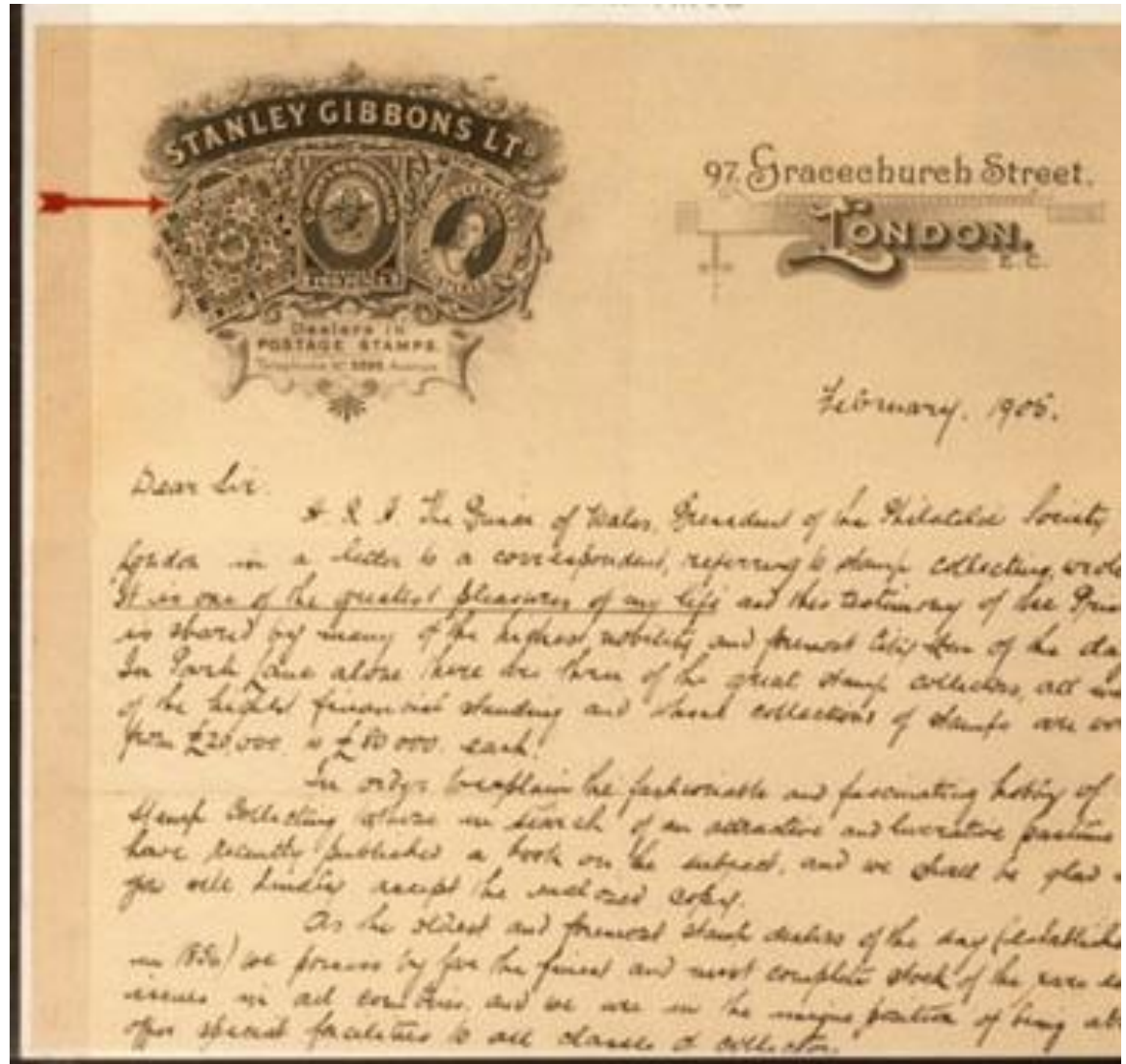
Robert Pratt had no idea
where the mistreated
Newfoundland 2d came
from ...



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... until he obtained this letter from Stanley Gibbons from 1905 and the mystery was solved.

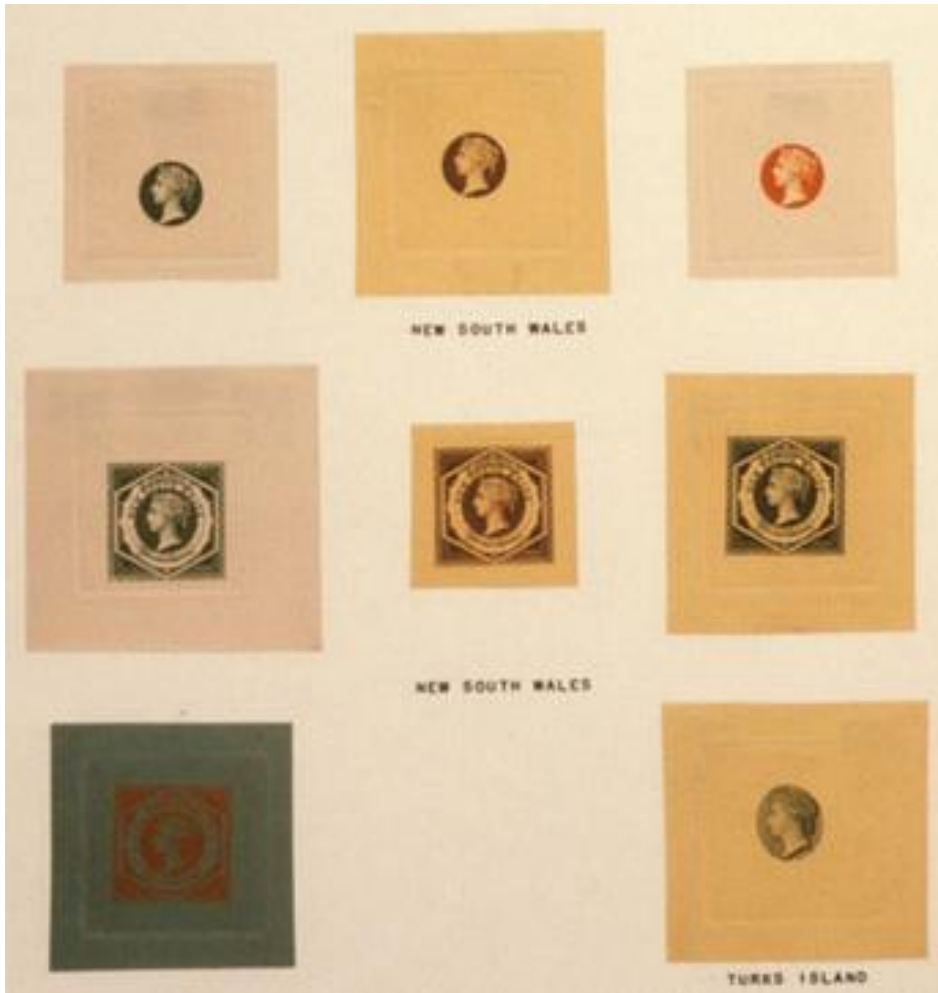
The Stanley Gibbons letter is most interesting in its sales pitch to a prospective customer.



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Plate 1 should chronologically appear here as it was produced in 1919; however, it will be discussed under Newfoundland, as this is the first time these duties have appeared since the initial Plates X and XA from 1902. There were some items prepared in this year that are of interest.

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Here is a slide of single die proofs. These were made by using individual dies and then creating the surrounding die sinkage by squeezing a clear block into the paper. Notice all the impressions are the same size. The selection is sparse and other examples exist in other colors and on other papers.

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The Griebert card is presumed to have been prepared about 1920 as Mr. Griebert passed on in 1921. It is an interesting use of an unused essay. The 3d Newfoundland die in the montage is from Die II, the unused essay.

Griebert was a London stamp dealer. This was probably used on a letterhead.

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When was the Perkins Bacon & Co. Ltd. specimen card printed? Bob Pratt had no idea. It had several values we have seen before mounted separately upon it.

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The developing progressive proof die, identified as being from the 1929 or later printings by the paper and the color of the last impression, is a small version of a trade sample sheet. Its series of progress proofs with the two backgrounds and the four vignettes form a study in progressive proof making. The vignettes, often with outlining border rings, embellish later invitations and menus.

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There are four plates that contain Newfoundland duties -- Plate X, in two states; Plate 1, in three states; Plate 6, in two states; and Plate 30, in two states. It took 14 years to definitely prove that Plate X and its defaced extension, Plate XA, existed. The last piece fell into place in 1982 when offered, as usual, by a most unexpected source, at outrageous prices. Prior to this event, Bob Pratt had collected from multiple dealers a ragtag array of single pieces that arranged and rearranged themselves into many combinations. Some of them are incorporated in this first page of Plate XA. It was apparent from the strawberry colored bits that the defaced 2d was located next to the defaced 1d and 5d, and that a stamp was located beneath the defaced square. Which one? And how many others made up the sheet?

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The orange and scarlet vermilion singles were next to arrive.

To prove how dangerous these were, Bob Pratt offered them to a knowledgeable and respected dealer as mint stamps without gum. When he accepted, he was told of their provenance and he acknowledge that they could have passed as beautiful stamps.

Indeed they are so good that the orange 6 1/2d was once listed in the catalogues.

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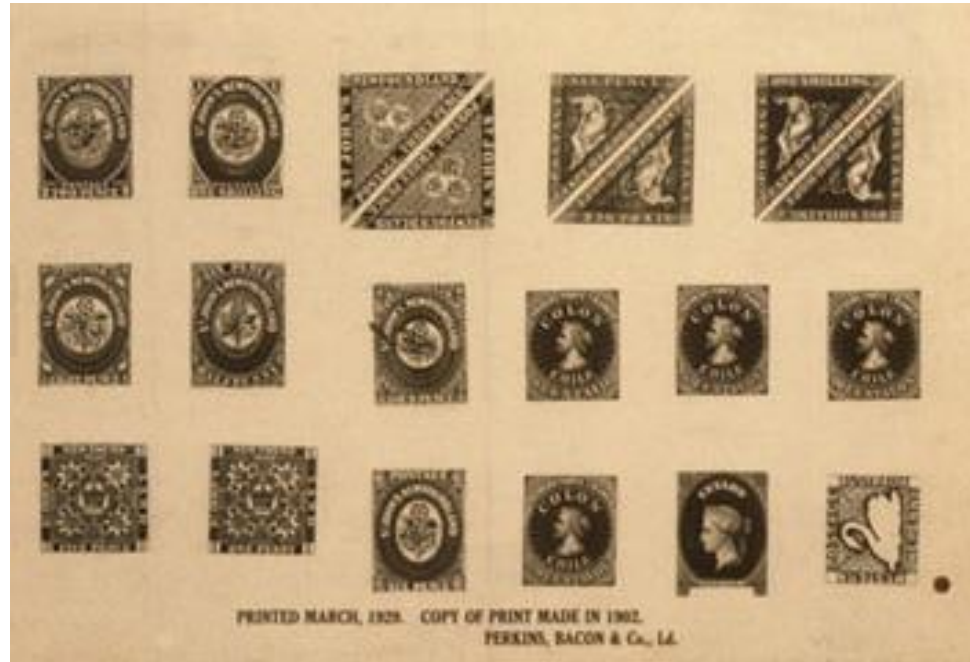
The brownish orange duties furnished more information. The defaced stamp was a 1d and the 5d resided next to the 3d pair. However, this did not define the bottom row.

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The final and conclusive piece was the strip of three, 6 1/2d, 8d and 4d, green duties on board from the defaced sheet. This firmed up the bottom row, indicating that only the three lowest values had been defaced, and determined a location for the right margin of the plate. The colors and papers are of the 1902 variety, and this seems to establish that the plate was prepared then. The defacement of the 1d is most like the die prepared for the 1910 Herts Menu. We still do not know if there were other duties above, to the left or below the nine Newfoundland stamps. From these two states of Plate X, one should have been aware that the defacement of the duties was accomplished on the plate and not on a die or a roller, as was previously believed. And so the Plate X mystery has been partially solved.

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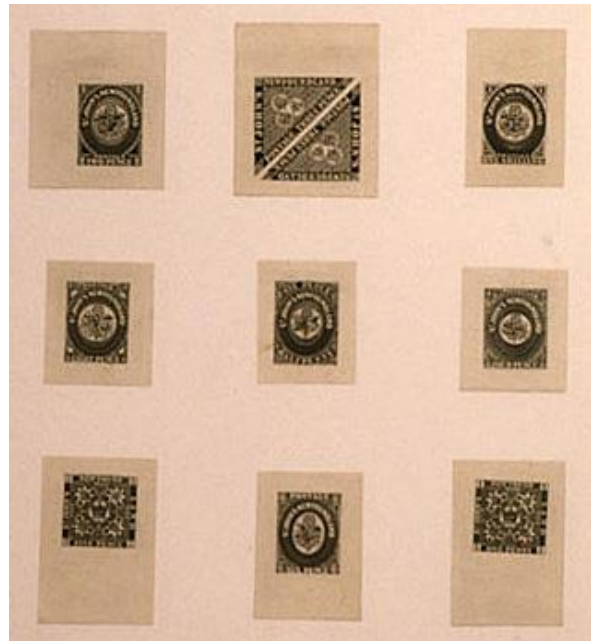
And now we come to the most prolific sheet of all. This is named Plate 1 because its later defacement was defined by the printers as Plate 1A. Bob Pratt never saw a complete sheet in its pristine state. It exist in a later state, scarred and scratched while in storage and reprinted in 1929. Note well the 4d, second row third from left. The literature states that this plate was prepared for a London dealer, believed to be Stanley Gibbons or Griebert, who had been bothered by remarkable forgeries of Newfoundland stamps (Plate X no doubt, as we have seen). It was printed in eight delightful colors, which are the most pleasing of all the printings, on a porous soft wove paper about 0.007 inch thick.

Perkins Bacon Trade Samples

In orange.



In black.



In vermillion.

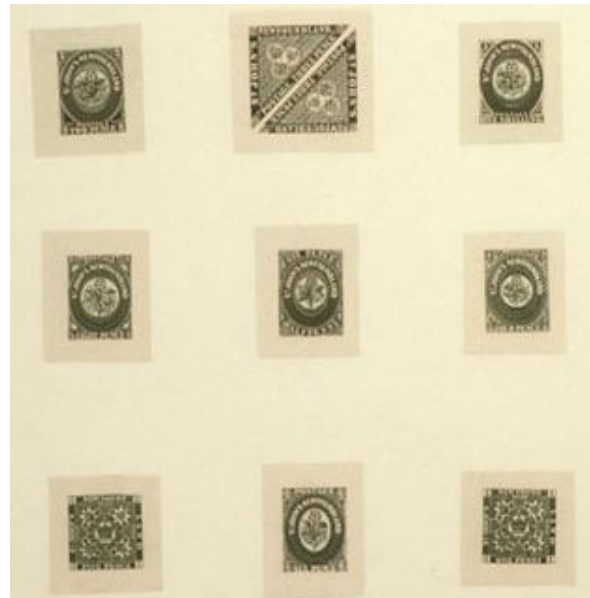


Perkins Bacon Trade Samples

In green.



In grey black.

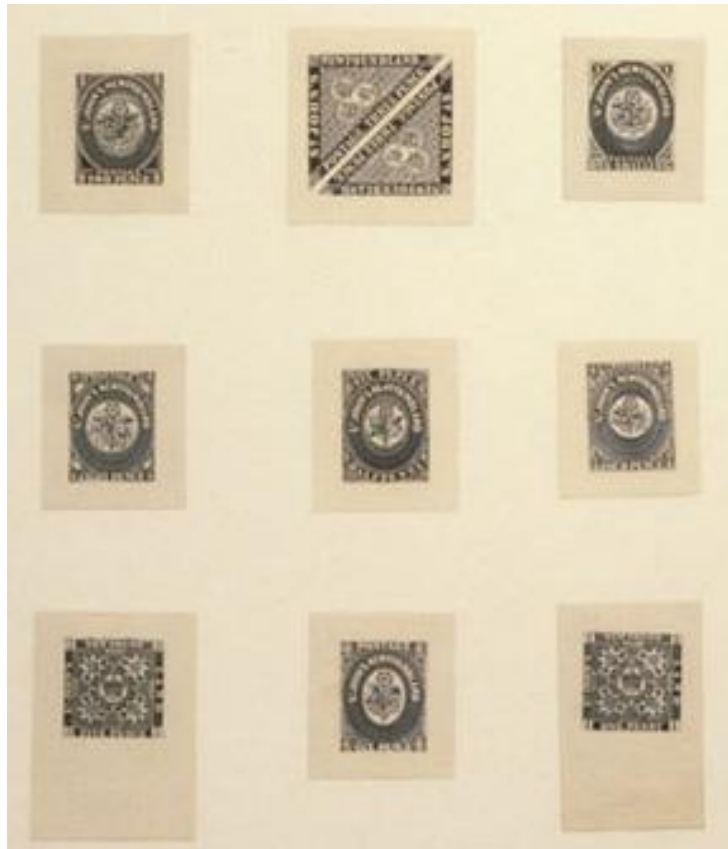


In rose.



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In blue grey.



In violet.



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In 1929 Plate 1 was reproduced many times. By now it had been retrieved from storage where it had been roughly handled. Many scratches and gouges were noticeable on its surface. This time the colors are vivid and more garish and less pleasing. An example in green is shown here.

There is a story connected with this printing that seems to indicate that the sheets were produced to provide monetary reward to someone. If true, it would provide a motive for the sheets with the statement "Printed March 1929, Reprints of specimens printed 1902 - 1919, Perkins, Bacon & Co, Ltd Signed. James D. Heath - Managing Director" which would indicate legitimacy if not removed. This must have been after a London dealer had made the firm aware of the examples in the hands of dealers.

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After this discovery, it was evidently decided to deface the scarred Plate 1. A remainder from Mr. Heath's group is a print of the plate before it was defaced. One statement says "values were blacked out about 1929". All of the Newfoundland duties with the exception of the 6d and the 6 1/2d are surrounded by red lines. The footnote "N.B. Die in B.C., 31" explains why. Another note "Plate laid down by Fisher" confirms the idea that it was prepared in 1919. The rollers used to impress that are listed, and the 4d has the added note "damage not on R.", meaning damage not on roller, proving that the damage was done to the soft plate during storage. There is also a pencil inscription "1 & 1A" giving credence to the numbering of the plate as Plate 1.

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How was the blackout to be done? The 8d die from the 1856 printings of the Newfoundland stamps became the recipient of several different attempts at defacing the product. Two maltreated proofs and an untouched one from this die are shown. More are known to exist. Note the example in the lower right corner. It is similar to the final result at defacement as you will see.

How do we know they are from the year 1856? The paper is like that used on many other die proofs available from the period. The 2d die was also printed at this time, but defacements do not seem to exist.



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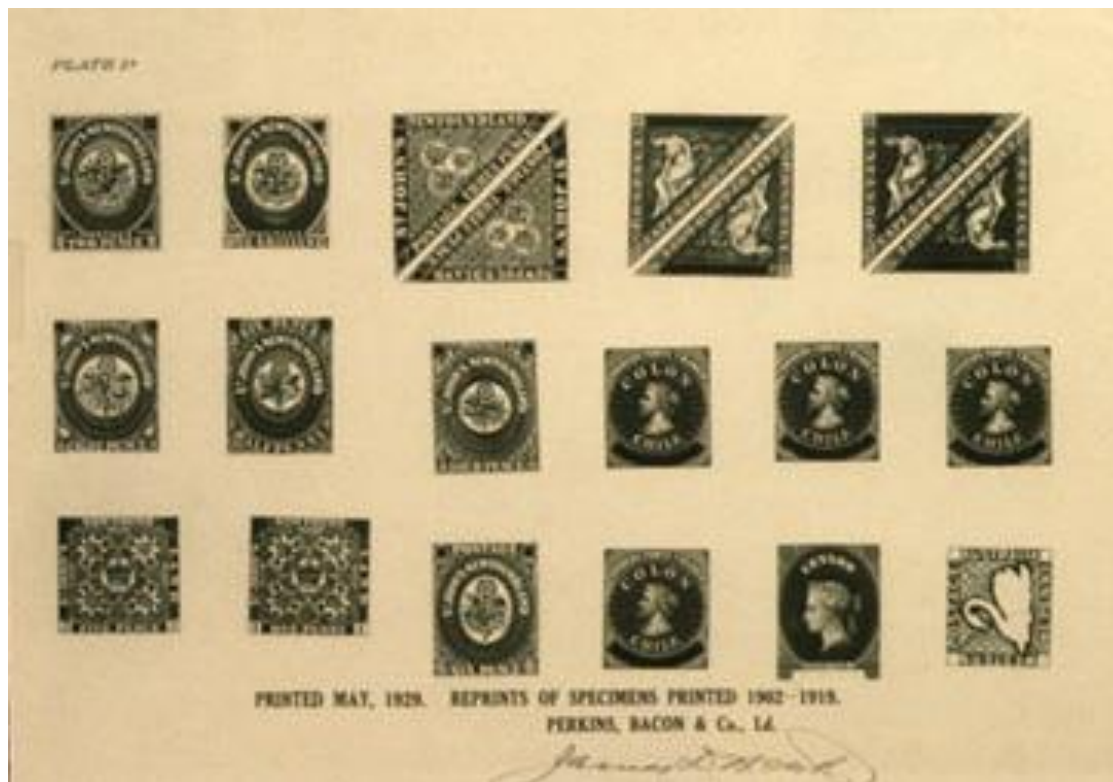
Raymond Heath now gives us a copy of Plate 1A with the defacements in place and a few side notes. We learn that “original plate laid down many years before, values defaced about 1929 or early 1930” and “Plate destroyed 27 May 1931”. It is also apparent that the defacements were made upon the plate and not on dies or rollers. In addition, the 4d has been cleaned up and other blemishes have been removed from the stored plate. This was only possible because the plate had never been hardened.



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We now come to Plate 1A, the defaced state of Plate 1. Why was it prepared? As we know, it was done to cover up the 1929 printings of Plate 1.

This example shows the plate with the bottom label added by Managing Director Heath in May 1929.



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The plate was again printed in the same six colors and on the same 0.0042 inch thick, wove paper as plate 1.

In black.



In dark green.



In orange.



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In scarlet.



In dark blue.



In violet.



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Then an additional printing was made on a thicker wove paper in five colors plus black.

In black.



In dark brown.



In orange.



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In dark blue.



In dark green.



In scarlet.



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Mr. Heath has given us a very important bit of evidence, and a unique print. This page shows the forerunner of Plate 6, which was prepared 2 October 1929 and not in 1908 as had been suspected. This was the next to last plate of the trade sample sheets to be produced and was the only one that initially got into the hands of dealers in the defaced condition. The note "all stamps except this one (Barbados - 6d on roller) which was threaded out on the plate too soon, i.e. before proof, are as they are on rollers as numbered. This plate was engraved with cancellation marks as near as possible to those originally engraved (see below)" This refers to the right duty of Van Diemens Land in the bottom row which has the following note: "Line stoned off R, meaning Roller, after laying down the left most two".



The Newfoundland 4d and 1/- both have the red surrounding lines, which indicated that the die was in "B.C.31".

The South Australia stamp has a note regarding a portion of the bottom design which was ground off. From the print, it is apparent that the defacements were made on the plate and not on the rollers.

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This pull is dated 8 October 1929 and shows the date on which Plate 6 was completed. A note reads “Engraving in value spaces done Oct 1929 to imitate those originally done on menu cards etc. of earlier and subsequently erased. See above proof of plate from original rollers. Plate destroyed 27 May 1931.” There is a check mark beside the four Newfoundland stamps for some reason, probably because it was never defaced, and a note beside the rightmost New Zealand “see die 1178”. Also a “6” in pencil. This will become Plate 6 as the next slide will show.

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Here is the final production of Plate 6. The 1908 date previously assigned because of the inclusion of the New Zealand die used for the Herts menu of June 4, 1907 and the defaced Newfoundland 1/- from the Herts menu of 1906 is no longer valid.

The plate was reproduced on heavy card about 0.0125 inches thick in blue and on lighter card about 0.0095 inches thick in October 1929 in seven colors, and on the usual papers in several colors.



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This seems to be a difficult plate to obtain in all colors and papers.

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The last of the plates, which Bob Pratt called Plate 30 and Plate 30A because they were prepared in April 1930 by admission of Mr. Raymond Heath and by the notes in the Proof Book resident at the Royal Philatelic Society, London. It is also possible that Plate 6 was made for Mr. Bond in October 1929.



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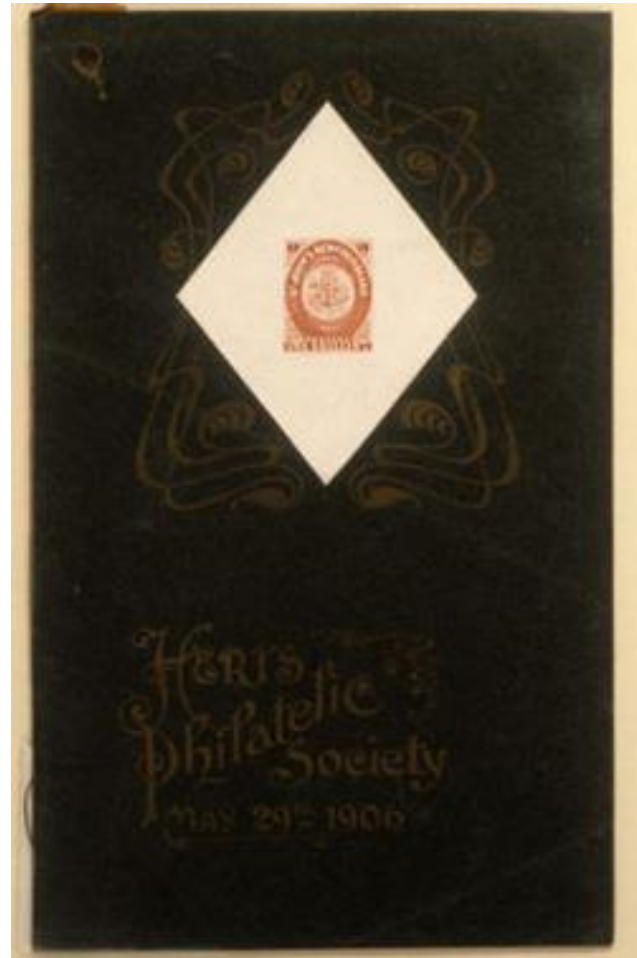


The only known copies of the “30” plates reside in the vaults of the Royal in London. The defacements on Plate 30A are reminiscent of the Newfoundland defacements.

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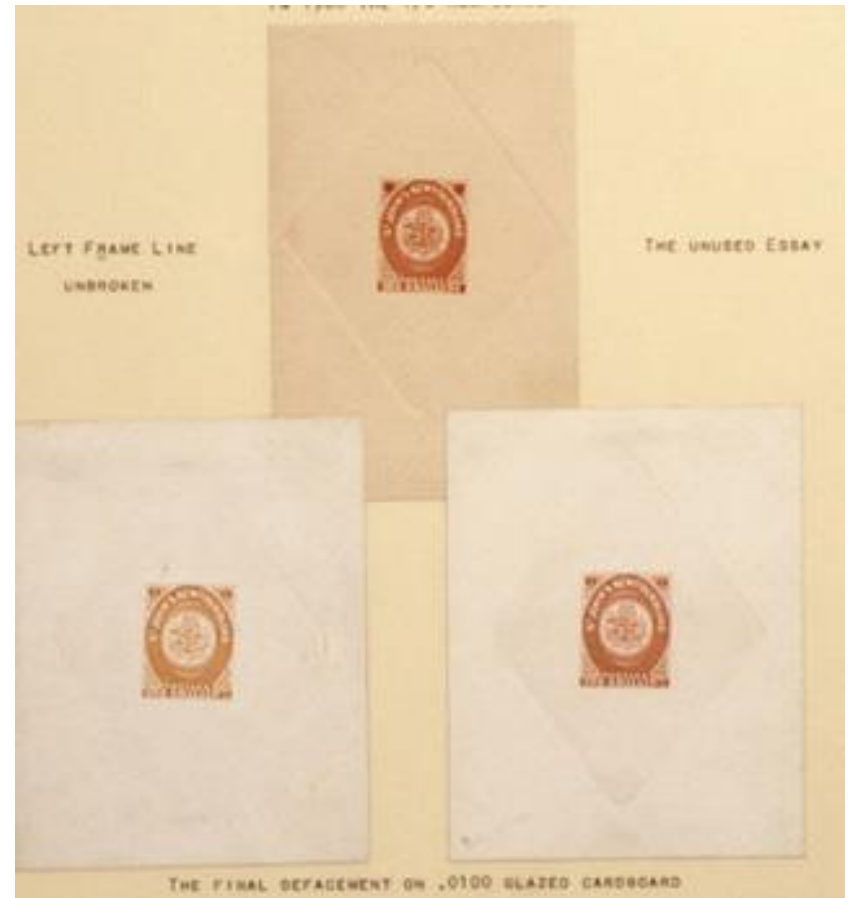
We now come to some of the most intriguing prints to embellish a philatelic society banquet menu, the Herts Philatelic Society menus.

To embellish the menu of 29 May 1906, a defaced example of the 1/- Newfoundland was selected that had been shown undefaced on both Plate X and Plate XA. It was altered in a manner similar to the Plate XA's 2d.



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The defacement was made in two steps and in the process the original roller for the shilling stamp was damaged.



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In preparing the unused essay, two nicks were made in the outer frame line left side of the original. When the roller was used the second time to make the die for the final defacement, these open spaces in the outer frame line became apparent, and show up again in Plate 1. They do not appear in Plate X or Plate XA thus proving that Plate 1 was made prior to 1906.



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The new diamond shaped die, made for this menu, was further defaced in 1919 and then printed on paper used that year, thus ending its useful life.



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In 1907 the invitation acquired a defaced Barbados stamp, now containing the legend "HERTS PHIL. SOC" in the value space. The original, with the value space blank, had been on the 13 Plate.

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The menu for the Herts meeting on 7 June 1907 bore a copy of a New Zealand stamp with the value block now reading “H. P. S. 4th JUNE 1907”. It would seem that this had been derived from the Single New Zealand Plate. If this is true, it would have been prepared prior to 1919.



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A slide is shown on 1919 Papers with the bottom value line removed. It is possible, however, that these are from one of the Herts modified dies.

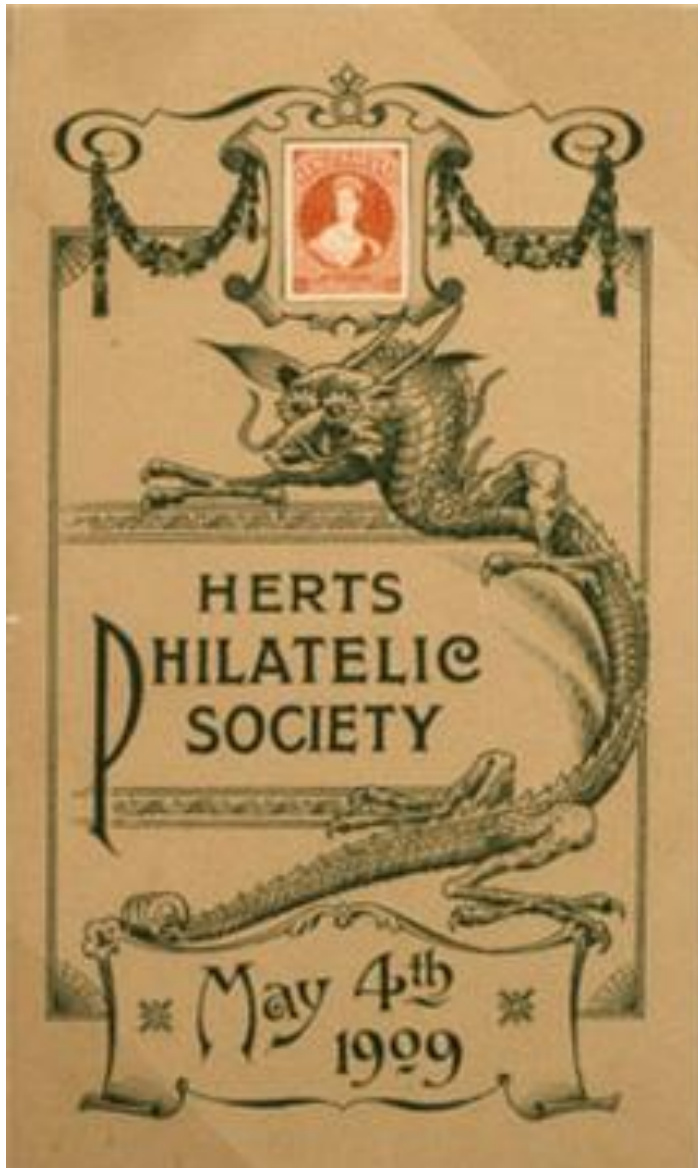
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1908 passed without recourse to Perkins Bacon Die proofs on menu or invitation.

In 1909, we again find Perkins Bacon assisting in the pleasantries. The invitation bears a defaced copy of a Ceylon duty with CEYLON replaced by background material and the value block reading "HERTS PHIL. SOC".



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The menu has our friend the New Zealand stamp, now with the value block reading “H.P.S. 4th May 1909”. This die did not become inscribed in Plate 6 as did its predecessor from the 1907 menu and the 1/- Newfoundland from the 1906 menu.

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1910 witnesses the final use of Perkins Bacon dies in embellishing the menus and invitations. The menu contains our other Newfoundland die -- the defaced 1d like Plate XA. It is shown in red and blue with the title in the value block "H.P.S. April 28th 1910". Unfortunate Bob Pratt was only able to obtain the dies and not the whole menu.

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This item is from Mr. Raymond Heath's collection, which relates the details of the dies used for printing some of the menus.

The 1909 -1910 invitations were made from copper plates, the final defacement of the 1/- Newfoundland were made from soft steel plates, and the 1910 menu with the defaced Newfoundland 1d was on a copper plate, steel faced. All these items were destroyed 27 May 1931.

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And with that,
this presentation is complete.

Perkins Bacon Trade Samples

Acknowledgements: all the images used in this presentation, except for the photograph of Robert H. Pratt, have been cropped from scans of the 35 mm photographic slides in the Robert H. Pratt Slide Collection in the possession of the Collectors Club of Chicago. We appreciate their cooperation in the production of this slide show.