

## SOLVING THE RIDDLE OF NEWFOUNDLAND # 128 — WE HOPE

by Dan Meyerson

Those collectors of Newfoundland stamps who read my article on Scott's #128 in the August issue of "Topics," may have wondered how the printers at the office of the Royal Gazette in St. John's could have set the type up in such a manner that either the lower or upper set of values was obliterated by the bars, and not both sets at the same time.

I have often racked my brain and tried to think up a solution for this vexing problem, and at long last I believe that I may have the answer.

At a recent Harmer-Rooke sale I was able to purchase a copy of the 6c Cabot, Scott's #66, with the same overprint found on #128. The overprint is in black and the bars are 10½mm. apart. Boggs, talking of the 1920 Provisionals in his book on Newfoundland has this to say, "It was intended at one time to use the 6c Cabot, and the surcharge that was used on the first setting of the 3c on 15c scarlet was applied to two blocks of twenty-five, one in red, and the other in black." Had the above quotation said "first applied," most of our problems would have been solved.

Now if we examine the 6c Cabot, we notice that the figure "6" only appears twice on the stamp and that they appear in a straight line about ¼ of the way down from the top of the design. It was therefore a simple matter for the upper bar to be so placed as to obliterate the figures. The second or lower bar was then placed 10½mm. apart because had it been placed 13½mm. apart, it would not have appeared on the stamp proper, but in the margin.

Then for some reason probably due to the lack of a sufficient stock of the 6c Cabot, it was decided to use the 15c, Scott's #70, in its stead. However the printer did not take cognizance of the fact that the figure "15" appeared four times on #70 whereas the figure "6" only appeared twice in the case of #66.

What evidently happened is that the printer in doing the surcharging placed the upper bar over the upper set of figures, and assumed that it would be satisfactory as had been the case in the trial surcharge of the 6c stamp. After several sheets had been so surcharged it was discovered that the lower values were not obliterated so they tried to remedy the situation by the means I spoke of in the August issue of "Topics."

Finally after 150 sheets or 3,000 stamps had been overprinted they decided to correct the condition by making the bars 13½mm. apart and in this manner they created Scott's #129.

It should be frankly stated that the above article is merely my interpretation of what happened and that it is based solely on the facts that I have been able to gather.

Perhaps one of our fellow-members can give a definite answer, if so I would much appreciate hearing from him.

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## SMITH'S POSTAL HISTORY

by F. Walter Pollock

To my article in the July TOPICS, just one reply was received, but it was indeed most welcome; Winthrop S. Boggs lent us a copy of Smith's opus to read.

Well and interestingly written, with a very complete index, the book is, of course, entirely authoritative; Mr. Smith spent thirty-six years in the service of the Post Office Department of Canada, and was at one time the Secretary of the Department.

The information contained in the more than three hundred and fifty pages is invaluable to the study of early postal history, and particularly to the understanding of the rates charged for and the routes travelled by covers of the pre-stamp period.

The book is not arranged for the philatelist; thus the changes in rates must be followed throughout the text, and the stamps in which we are so deeply interested are hardly mentioned.

For the record, the exact title is "The History of the Post Office in British North America, 1639-1870," the author is William Smith, and the book was published by the Cambridge (England) University Press in 1920. Out of print now, of course, and the current price is around \$20.

I might add that the title is quite inclusive, the American Colonies being rightly considered as a part of British North America until 1775, wherefore the student of early American history will be as much attracted to this volume as the Canadian.

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## THE 3c NEWFOUNDLAND PROVISIONAL OF 1902

by Dan Meyerson

What is the story behind the bisecting of stamps for use on Aug. 26, 1902. It is not too much to believe that there may have been a shortage of 3c stamps, but when we examine the covers used that day we notice a strang condition existing.

To date I have seen three such covers, and all three were addressed to Avondale, N. F., and are postmarked C. B. Railway T. P. O., Aug. 26, '02 in circle and are backstamped at Avondale, Aug. 26, 02, also in circle.

However it is only when we examine the stamps used that we are faced with the aforesaid strange condition. As I have said before, I have seen three different covers, yet each of these covers bore a different combination of bisected stamps.

The first bore a bisected 2c Cabot, Scott's #62, used in conjunction with a normal stamp. The stamps were tied to the cover by the postmark and also a large 3 in black.

The second cover was franked with a bisected 6c Cabot, Scott's #66, and was tied in the same fashion.

The third cover bore still another combination, having a normal and a bisected 2c King Edward, Scott's #82, to make up the 3c rate. As is the case in the two previous instances the stamp and the bisect are tied by the postmark and also the large 3.

Isn't it strange that when a shortage of 3c stamps arose that the postmaster found it necessary to use at least three different combinations to fill the need. To my mind these are not true bisects, but rather philatelic favors made only with a monetary gain in view and certainly not worth the \$20-\$40 asking price.

Can any of our members shed any further light upon the subject.

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