

Trail of the Caribou

By Freres Meyerson



G. Lewis



With all stamp issuing countries celebrating the 75th anniversary of the creation of the Universal Postal Union in 1874, we think this a good time to discuss a matter that has troubled us for quite some time.

Several years ago we purchased two Newfoundland stamps, Scott's #'s 28 & 30, overprinted "SPECIMEN" in serifed black letters diagonally across the stamps (see illustration). We checked through our library and could find no record of this type of overprint on these stamps. As a consequence these two stamps were put on the back page of the stockbook where we keep material we cannot account for. Within the past year however, in going through an auction catalog, we noted several lots of Newfoundland stamps described as bearing a black diagonal "SPECIMEN" overprint on Scott's #'s 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 30, 31, 32a, 33 and 35. Comparison of this overprint with those we had proved they were identical. Since we had a copy on #30 and one was up for sale, it also proved that more than one set had been so overprinted. After purchasing all the material we went back to Boggs' book and on page 49 found the first indication that this overprint (see illustration) had been

seen before. Boggs listed this overprint as having been seen on Scott's #'s 15a, 17, 11a, 18, 12a, 20, 21, 22 and 23. The confusing thing about it all was that the overprint on the stamps of 1862-63 was exactly like the overprint on the stamps of 1870-71. To further complicate matters, the stamps that were overprinted had come from different manufacturers. Nos. 18-23 had been printed by Perkins, Bacon & Co., #'s 28-35 by the American Bank Note Co. This then precluded the possibility of the overprint having been applied by the manufacturer as it is hard to believe that stamps overprinted about 9 years apart by two different manufacturers would have conformed so exactly to type and ink. The only logical conclusion to follow was that the stamps were overprinted sometime after 1871 and at one time. Since Newfoundland had not demonetized the Pence Issues, and we know that they were in stock as remainders as late as 1889, as were the other values, we must assume that they were overprinted for a specific purpose. We can only assume that the purpose was the occasion of Newfoundland's entrance into U. P. U. in 1879. The stamps overprinted "SPECIMEN" were submitted to the Union as examples of the stamps that would be used to frank letters originating in Newfoundland, and all letters bearing such stamps were to be honored.

If any reader has further information that can either prove or disprove our assumption, we would be very much interested in hearing from them.

In the Nov. 19, 1936, Post Office Circular, we find the following notation: "The staff is reminded that the rate of postage for Christmas Cards in unsealed envelopes is 2 cents for cards addressed to all places outside Newfoundland and 1 cent for delivery in Newfoundland." In the circular of Jan. 7, 1937, we read, "All letters and postal packets which cannot for any

reason be delivered must be endorsed on the front with the reason for non-delivery such as "Gone away," "Refused," "Deceased," etc., initialed by the Officer making the endorsement and date-stamped with the name of the Office." Examples of the foregoing must be few as none of them have ever been brought to our attention. In the circular dated Feb. 11, 1937, we are told that all letters containing money in the form of paper currency or coin must be registered and in the event that such letters are not registered upon posting, the Postmaster is authorized to register the letter and tax it for the amount of the registration fee.

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