

Trail of the Caribou

By DAN MEYERSON (BNAPS L3)



RECENTLY at one of the auctions we saw a cover that bothered us and started an entire chain reaction. The cover in question was from St. John's to Prince Edward Island, and it was franked with the 5d, Scott No. 5. The cancel was from St. John's and dated July 4, 1860. What bothered us about the cover was three things—the St. John's strike itself didn't ring quite true, there was apparent overpayment of postage, and lastly, the abbreviation of "July" in the cancel was "JL." To our knowledge and from everything that we have been able to read, the rate to P.E.I. was 4d. Secondly, every time that we have seen the month of July abbreviated in a cancel, it has always been "JY" and not "JL" as on this cover.

A little more research brought on the question that prompted this article. For what purpose was the 5d stamp issued? There must have been a rather definite purpose, because 11,000 were printed of this value, and yet in Boggs, when we examine the Abstract of Stamp Account taken from the books of the General Post Office, Newfoundland, for the period from Jan. 1, 1857, to Dec. 31, 1858, the first two years that the stamp had been in existence, we find that only four had been sold at the G.P.O. in St. John's, and that 80 were in the possession of the Outport Post Offices. Hardly seems to be moving quickly enough to warrant a printing of 11,000!

An examination of the rates in effect at that time, as well as we know them, also makes one wonder why the 5d was issued. The 1d was issued to pay the newspaper rate to the United Kingdom, the 2d was the rate per ounce for printed books, magazines, periodical publications and pamphlets transmitted by post within the Colony, and the rate went up 2d per ounce to six ounces, so we find possible use for the 4d, the 6d, the 8d and the 1 shilling. The inland letter rate within Newfoundland was 3d per half ounce. Further, all covers that we have ever seen to Nova Scotia and New

Brunswick, and we must assume Prince Edward Island, were franked with the 4d. The rate to the United Kingdom was 6d per half ounce, and we now find another use for the shilling, as it could be used for the double rate to the United Kingdom. The rate to the United States was 6½d, but this one seems to be a bit of a puzzler as most of the covers that we see are franked with the 4d or a bisect of the 8d. However, each of these covers also bears the cancellation "Boston British Packet 5," and we assume that this means 5 cents and when this is converted into pence we get 2½d, which added to the previous 4d makes 6½ in all.

We found a reason for the existence of the 8d as the quadruple rate for printed books, etc., and now we see that it may also be used as the double 4d rate. Finally, we see that the 1 shilling served at least two purposes, to prepay the rate of six ounces of printed books, etc., transmitted by post within the Colony, and also to serve the double rate to England. Why then was the 5d issued in such large quantities and yet used so sparingly the first two years, because another 20,000 were sent out by Perkins Bacon on June 15, 1860, and a further shipment of 10,000 was sent out on Nov. 30, 1861. The last two shipments contain the stamps that we know as Scott Nos. 12a, 19 and 19a. To further confuse the issue, we are advised by Boggs that as of April 1889, there were 17,025 copies still at the post office. We have seen only two copies of the 5d, Scott No. 5, used on cover prior to this, and they are both in the Harry Goody collection and they are used in conjunction with a 1d to make up the 6d rate to England.

We have seen quite a few covers franked with the 5d of all printings used after April 7, 1865, as between that date and Nov. 15, 1865, when the new decimal stamps made their appearance, the 5d stamp was equivalent to the 10 cent rate necessary to pre-

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