

# NEWFOUNDLAND

## The Long Coronation Issue – 1937 –

### A Problem

#### PART 1

#### INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Stanley Gibbons Catalogue stated that there were two dies for the three cent value of Newfoundland's 1937 Long Coronation issue, there has been discussion as to the truth of the statement. Their catalogue shows a picture purporting to be partial views of the two dies. The discussion has been raised again with the discovery of proof sheets which are believed to be evidence that two dies were used in preparing the issued stamps.

I have made the statement that I did not believe the stamps were made from two different PLATES which might indicate that two different DIES were used. I was wrong, and the evidence that I will introduce here, while circumstantial, will tend to validate the two DIE/PLATE claim. Photographs of the known Die Proofs and some of the Plate Proofs (where available) will be shown to flesh out the statements.

#### THE THREE CENT VALUE

That there are two varieties of the three cent value is undisputed. Winthrop Boggs, in his *Postage Stamps and Postal History of Newfoundland* (1942 - pp 122), states: "Die I, the impression is weak. There are apparently white spaces throughout the design, which under glass are seen to be merely weak lines. The Portrait is particularly poor.

"Die II, the entire impression is much clearer and stronger. The apparently white spaces are no longer noticeable. The Portrait is improved but still poor."

So Boggs started the DIE controversy on,

no doubt, an assumption.

My observations indicate that the so-called Die II varieties can be recognized by the fuzzi-ness of the impression of the Vignette of the King. In addition, a set of engraving dots runs down the King's nose, from the forehead to the tip. These are prominent in the second printing, but almost invisible in the first printing. There are also slight variations in the color of the stamp, the second being of a lighter and more yellowish tone. Photos of State 1, Die I; and State 2, Die II are shown as figure 1. There are other slight variations in frame lines that will be covered later.

#### THE DISCUSSIONS IN NEWFOUNDLAND

The three cent was one of the few values (two to be exact, in addition to the King's vignette or effigy) which was required to be completely designed from the ground up. The others used engraver's methods to salvage the basic designs from the 1932 Industrial set for inclusion with the King's head in the new issue. Prior to the initiation of this set of stamps, there had been much discussion in Newfoundland as to the advisability of including the Monarch on the issue. It started with a communication from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (London) on 10 February 1936 which stated in effect, that Colonial Governments should continue printing existing stamps for approximately a year until a new effigy of His Majesty could be approved for use on United Kingdom stamps.

This was the year of turmoil within the Royal Family, Edward VIII became King on the death of his father, George V, on 20 January 1936. His



Figure 1: Die I (L) & Die II (R)



Figure 2: Essays

desire to marry Wallace Simpson led to considerable opposition from the Church and the populace, and finally resulted in his abdicating on 10 December 1936. George VI, his brother, ascended the throne and became King on 11 December 1936. Within one year England had seen three Monarchs ruling the country. Imagine what all this did to those who were preparing stamps or 'effigies'.

Downing Street advised, through Circular 2 on 7 August 1936, that it would be impossible to commemorate the Coronation, which was in close proximity, by a special series of stamps or complete new issues. As no new stamps could be provided by Coronation day, the King did approve of placing on sale on 12 May 1937 "some few denominations of the new permanent issues necessitated by his accession, and that the remaining denominations should be issued as soon thereafter as possible". A simple portrait of the King was suggested for the most common values, and he desired that the same design be used throughout the Colonial Empire. The stamp

designs should be as free as possible of a multiplicity of detail, but if special pictorial designs had been adopted they could be retained and could be combined with a King's head vignette. Advice was requested on other matters pertaining to the issue, such as whether there was objection to the adoption of the standard King's head, whether the existing pictorial stamps would be retained, or if there were objections to omitting 'postage and revenue' from the design.

A standard design of the Edward VIII motif was prepared for the Crown printers by Thomas De La Rue. The essay for Newfoundland was also done by De La Rue. A shadow box mounted copy of the essay with the manuscript "Appvd for Newfoundland issue, 25/9/36" exists, as do photographic copies for this and other Colonies. (Figure 2) On the abdication of King Edward VIII all sketches, essays and proofs were recalled by the crown Agents and retained by them. The only replicas remaining are the photo sketches, thus any color information is unknown. The only use of this essay was to prepare the One Farth-



Figure 3: Perfin 'SPECIMEN'

ing stamp of Grenada, presumably by Harrison's & Sons Ltd.

A telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion affairs on 24 September 1936 ordered the following quantities of stamps (excluding those for sale in the United Kingdom) of the special anniversary commemorative set (1937 Coronation Issue) to be sold on 14 May 1937: 1) Two Cent — 1,500,000; 2) Four cent — 2,000,000; 3) Five cent — 1,250,000.

After the abdication of Edward VIII, the blank die for the George VI stamps was prepared by De La Rue, and furnished to Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. for preparation of some of the stamps. The order was split among the several security printers in order to expedite the work. What came to Newfoundland bore the faces of George VI and Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Examples of these exist punched 'SPECIMEN'. That the Newfoundland values were printed by Bradbury Wilkinson is attested to by the horseshoe shape of 'SPECIMEN' (Figure 3).

On 25 September 1936 the Dominion Office indicated that while a special issue of three values had been prepared for the Coronation, the Colonial Governments were free to revert to their own designs if they did not care to use the common design. Newfoundland was advised that any variation in design from that already approved had to first be submitted for His Majesty's approval. The Commission was requested to advise whether or not the design approved for the three Coronation value would be adopted by them or the additional values. It was also indicated that Downing Street assumed that the Crown Agents would handle the details of obtaining the remaining values. It is useful to remember that at this time Newfoundland was under a Commission form of Government and was not an independent body.

The Newfoundland Department of Posts and Telegraphs dispatched a long memo to the Commissioner for Finance on 13 October 1936. Unfortunately one page of the document is missing, but it appears that the important details are all available. The letter first gave, in table form, the particulars of the issue of stamps then in use.

*"The 2, 3, 4 and 7 cent stamps are portrait issues, and the remainder pictorial or industrial issues. It has been decided already that the present 2, 4 and 5 cents stamps are to be replaced by a Coronation issue. The question is whether or not the other denominations should be replaced."*

Val. Design	Purpose
1 ¢ Codfish	Inland Printed Papers
2 ¢ King George V	Local Letters
3 ¢ Queen Mary	Cheques
4 ¢ Prince of Wales	Inland Letters (Outports)
5 ¢ Caribou	Letters, Empire & U.S.A.
7 ¢ Dutchess of York	Letters, Foreign countries
8 ¢ Corner Brook	Inland Parcels (5 lbs)
10 ¢ Salmon	Inland Registered Letters
14 ¢ Dog	Canadian & U.S.A. parcels
15 ¢ Seal	Reg. Letters, Empire & U.S.A.
20 ¢ Cape Race	Heavy Parcels
24 ¢ Bell Island	British Parcels
25 ¢ Sealing Fleet	Heavy Parcels

The letter went on with a description of the Essay shown in Figure 2, and suggested that Downing Street would like the balance of the issue to be like the 3 values already ordered. The author of the letter, G.D. Frazer, Secretary, Department of Posts & Telegraph, was loath to state the reaction of the Newfoundland public to any attempt to abandon the 'Industrial' stamps. His associates in Newfoundland, and the local newspapers, had already given adverse comment on any attempt to accept a design common to the rest of the Empire. He offered three courses for Newfoundland: (1) restrict the Coronation issue to the three values already selected; (2) have a complete new issue produced, using the design of the Coronation issue as purchased; and (3) combine the three values purchased with a new issue of the 'Industrial' stamps bearing a vignette of the King's head. He recommended number (3) stating various advantages. (Here the page is missing.)

Continuing, Frazer suggested that the 30 cent value be replaced by a 48 cent value as the former use of the 30 cent had been voided. It is obvious from the results, seen later, that he recommended redesign of the 3 cent and 7 cent because the 2 cent, 4 cent and 5 cent stamps (Standard Coronation type) had removed the portrait designs from the issue. Two questions remained to be considered: (1) the omission of the word 'Postage' from the stamps as had been done on the three values; and (2) whether the order should be placed through the Crown Agents. Frazer's recommendation was against in both cases. He pointed out that the Crown Agents exercised supervisory controls, for a fee,

and that the present arrangement through the local representative of John Dickenson (D.R. Thistle, printer) and then to Perkins Bacon and Co. had been eminently successful in the past and had resulted in reduced costs to the Government. It was also pointed out that John Dickenson presently had 1 and 3/4 tons of Newfoundland watermarked paper on hand for the production of postage stamps.

On 20 October Mr. E.N.R. Trentham, Commissioner for Finance (Newfoundland) sent to the Secretary of the Commission his recommendation that Frazer's ideas should be followed, i.e.: (1) the new issue of stamps should consist of the 2, 4 and 5 cent stamps already approved, (2) the existing designs of the Industrial Issue should be combined with a vignette of the King's head; (3) as the present 1 cent stamp design

was unpopular, it should be redesigned; (4) the stamps should be purchased direct from John Dickenson; (5) Customs and Inland Revenue Stamps would be separately referred to the Commission.

And so the stage was set to order the next issue of stamps from Perkins Bacon and Company. Of interest to us now are the Vignette of the King's head and the design of the three cent stamp which, with the one cent, would have to be designed from scratch.

All of the above comments and letters were based on the assumption that Edward would remain King. When the final designs were made, George VI had taken over. Newfoundland never issued any stamps commemorating Edward VIII.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

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