

NEWFOUNDLAND'S FIVE CENT CARIBOU AGAIN

by Derek Paul

Waterlow & Sons' Plate 41419

Abstract: The comb perforated five cent Caribou stamps that were first used in October 1941 are here shown to have been printed from the same Waterlow & Sons' plate as the line perfed 12½ stamps from 1942. Thus there must have been a 1941 printing from this plate, even though the known records of Waterlow & Sons do not show this. None of the 1941 printing appears to have been line perfed, whereas the February 1942 printing may have been perfed both ways and all later printings seem to have been only line perfed.

Since the publication of my article (1) on the five cent Caribou stamp that first appeared in October 1941, I have been encouraged to do more research because little was known about the printing of these stamps (2). The earlier die I stamps, which are systematically about 0.6mm narrower than those of 1941, had been produced by Perkins Bacon, and had not been in use since 1938. The die I reappeared, after three years out of use, comb perforated. These stamps were used

in considerable numbers in October and November 1941 and again in October and November 1942 (1). The first line perforated 12½ die I were issued early in June 1942; except for the months of October and November of that year, their use was dominant from that time.

Ayshford learned that due to the bombing of the Perkins Bacon printing works in May 1941 the production of Newfoundland stamps passed to Waterlow & Sons (3). He lists the known printings of all five cent caribou stamps by Waterlow, beginning with the February 1942 printing (20,000 pulls) and the July printing (25,000 pulls) of the same year. He also identifies the proofs for the July printing as plate 41419, and attributes the same plate number to the February printing on grounds of similarity. A new plate, 42078, was used for the one printing that was done in 1943 and for part of the March 1944 printing. Other plates were used later on. The mystery of the comb perforated stamps is that they predate the available records, suggesting the possibility of a completely separate printing. The present re-

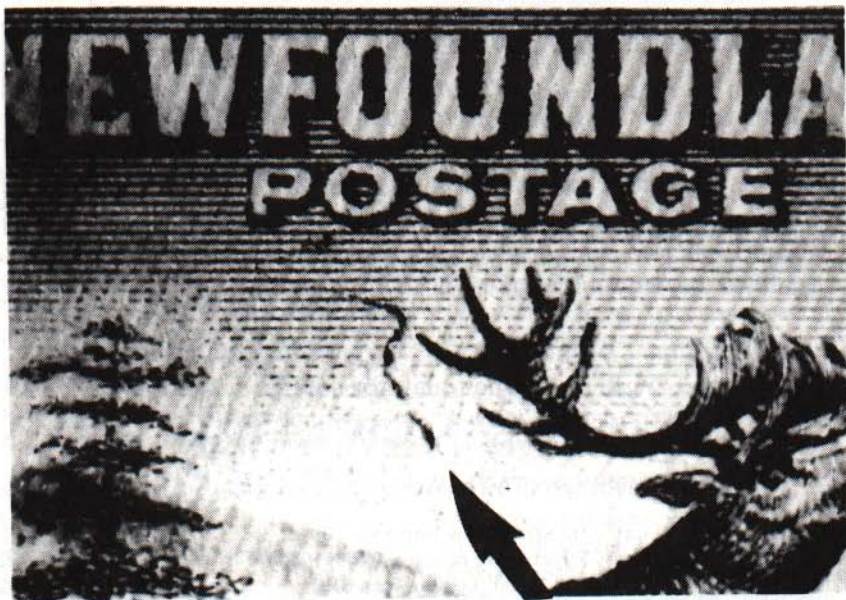


Fig. 1 The most spectacular of the faults of plate 41419, occurring at position 73.

search has settled the question definitively as follows.

The extremely close similarity in appearance between the comb perfed and line perfed varieties (S.G. cat. #280 and #280a) challenged me to find out whether they came from the same plate. Ayshford provided the essential clue. His book lists eight major plate faults which had been circled on the February 1942 plate proofs and describes them in words, giving their positions in the plate. In addition he mentions three minor plate faults at positions 39, 60 and 74 without describing them, bring the total number of faults to eleven. In a time of peace these faults would likely have been corrected prior to printing. They were certainly not corrected prior to the February 1942 printing, because the same faults were found in the plate proofs for the July 1942 printing.

In 1983 I began to search for plate faults on both the line and comb perfed stamps. One by one the major faults were found on both varieties. At the time of writing, faults have been found at over forty different positions (4), including all eight of Ayshford's major faults as described in his book. Only one of his eight proved at all difficult to identify, position 16, and that was only because a very similar fault exists with which it is easily confused. To establish the origin of these

stamps as plate 41419, it was sufficient to find some of the faults at the prescribed positions, at least twice each so as to be sure that they were not mere printing flaws. At least one each of these needed to be found on line perforated stamps bearing 1942 postmarks. The origin of the comb perfed stamps was settled by finding matching faults. This task, easy enough though it requires much time, established beyond doubt that the comb and line perfed stamps used in 1942 came from the same plate. However, to identify the 1941 printing it was necessary to find at least some of the same plate faults on stamps cancelled before February 1942.

The first two years of this investigation failed to turn up any items with established plate faults and clearly cancelled in that early period. The study reached a point of near certainty that the 1941 stamps must have been from an earlier and previously unheard-of-plate. I even prepared a draft article to this effect and sent it to a few friends! Then, at last, one of the most tiny of the minor faults turned up on a stamp having a clear 1941 cancel. I held off publishing, to await further evidence.

Recently, with a large new batch of wholesale material to work on, the 1941 cancels on established plate faults began to appear in statistically expected numbers. Fig. 1 illustrates a rather



Fig. 2 Position 60 detail showing the dots below the mane that stem only from the July 1942 printing, and the fault in the left-hand margin.



Fig. 3 Position 60 detail showing the faint streak at right but no dots below the mane. This type — from the earlier printings — has the same fault in the left margin as is seen in fig. 2.

photogenic example of a most conspicuous fault that has now been found several times with a 1941 cancel. The extensive new evidence shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the 1941 printing was done from plate 41419. All thirty four of the presently known plate faults that are found on the comb perforated stamps are also found on line perforated with cancels that preclude later plates.

Prior to this, I was a little in doubt that Waterlow had printed the 1941 stamps. Clarence Stillions had sent me a photocopy of a cover bearing a comb perforated Caribou dated November 1941 and having part of a Waterlow sheet mark — his stamp corresponds to position 5. These sheet markings tend to be very characteristic of the printing firm — Perkins Bacon's markings had been quite different. On re-examining my own collection, I found Waterlow sheet marks on several stamps postmarked in 1941, confirming Still-

ions' prior indication that Waterlow printed the 1941 issue.

In the later stages of this investigation another mystery emerged. Ayshford's frontispiece shows a block of four (positions 49, 50, 59, 60) from plate 41419; the plate faults at position 60 are circled and there is a signature in the margin with the date 19.8.42. This fault, illustrated in fig. 2, did not correspond to the fault already established for position 60 in the present study (fig. 3)! Careful re-examination of both types of position 60 stamp finally showed that the faint streak in fig. 3, between the tree and right hand frame-lines, can also sometimes be seen on the stamps having the fig. 2 fault. In addition, the > mark in the left margin is always common to both types. Thus the three dots below the name in fig. 2 were a new feature of plate 41419 in the summer printing, representing new damage to the plate. I have

not so far found the fig. 2 fault on any comb perf stamps, nor on any of the line perf bearing 1942 postmarks. This suggests that the stamps used in 1942 were all or almost all from the 1941 and Feb. 1942 printings and that little if any of the July printing was comb perfed.

In conclusion, it appears that all Waterlow's printings of the Caribou in 1941 and 1942 were from plate 41419. In particular the comb perf stamps are all from the same plate, and although a few of these were still in use in 1943 and 1944, there is no evidence yet that any stamps from the July 1942 and later printings were comb perforated.

The style of comb perforation used on plate 41419 is unusual in that the bottom right-hand corner block is perforated through both margins. The top right-hand corner block, on the other hand, is perforated through the right margin but not the upper margin, as is normal. I also have a left hand margin stamp that is perforated through the margin. The first newsletter of BNAPS' Newfoundland Study Group showed photocopies of a set of four corner blocks belonging to John Siverts, perforated through all except the top

margin, which is consistent with all my own observations. In the newsletter Stillions tentatively ascribes this style to double comb perforation or to harrow perforation (5).

I take pleasure in thanking Clarence Stillions and David Aggersberg for their letters and encouragement, Palmer Moffat for donating some stamps, Paul Prechner for encouragement and for leading me to a large and meaty herd of Caribou, and Harry Martin for actually supplying the beasts.

References

- (1) Derek Paul, 1984, *BNA TOPICS*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp33-36
- (2) Clarence A. Stillions (private communication)
- (3) John Ayshford, *The Last Stamps of Newfoundland*, (Robson Lowe, 1978)
- (4) A list and description of the plate faults may be obtained from the author.
- (5) I have referred to this style of perforation as comb in this article merely for brevity and to distinguish it from line.

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