

THE NEW PROFESSIONALS AND US SOME COMMENTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPERLY USING PHILATELIC LITERATURE

by Robert H. Pratt, OTB

FOREWORD

I am constantly amazed by the glaring mistakes which occur in the mass of auction catalogues, mail sale brochures, articles and other forms of philatelic communication which I receive the mail. Once they have been placed in print, these errors of commission appear and reappear with frightening frequency. All are so unnecessary. Most appear to be the result of a combination a too busy person with lack of a planned philatelic study and education program.

Today our school systems are being scolded for not providing basic knowledge. The emerging product, called 'functionally illiterate', is the result of an inadequate process, rather than an indolent stab at self-education. Similarly, I find that many the new breed of philatelic professionals are singularly lacking in the detailed knowledge required by their chosen calling - they are 'philatelically illiterate'.

WHO ARE US?

Us are the huge mass of people from all walks of life who call themselves Stamp Collectors, Philatelists, Stamp Buffs - you name it. We are legion. We are of all ages, from stripling to octogenarian. We are merchants, heads of corporations, shop workers, sales people, short order cooks, students, part timers - as many avocations as you can think of.

We are rich and poor, and somewhere in between. We can spend a weekly allowance of 50¢ with the same deliberation and enthusiasm and delight in our accomplishment, if that is all we can afford, as later on in life we can buy that rarity, that \$30,000.00 stamp. We can hobnob with royalty, or discuss stamping with a rabid alcoholic. There is never a time when collectors gather that conversation will be

silent. There is always something to learn, something to discuss, something to put away for future study, or new information or data to pass along to others.

How did Us get that way? We all started from an unknowledgeable state of mind which sought a hobby to satisfy our urge to amass something. Kid or Mom or Dad, the small squares of vari-colored paper attracted us. As we became more and more involved, discussions with a small time dealer whetted our appetite and gave us a smattering of knowledge. We were introduced to more affluent dealers, those with greater capacity to impart information, which now became more technical, more detailed and more specialist. We became acquainted with books and stamp publications, as well as advertisements that sold junk stamp lots.

WHO WERE THE OLD PROFESSIONALS?

We were on our way to being introduced to the epitome of dealers, the knowledgeable and influential professionals behind major dealerships and specialty auction houses. These were the people with lengthy files of previous auctions and collections, of shelves of printed matter on philatelic subjects, of specific information willingly passed down so that we too could take part in the discussions and, in time, help in filling out the incomplete matrix of data on a given subject (they were always hungry for more factual and detailed information). These were the wise ones; the oldtimers, the students, the smart traders through whose hands had passed the treasures of the past.

They taught Us, they prodded Us, they kindled in Us the desire to investigate, to learn, to study. They were the ones who inspired Us to display our goodies, first in local shows, then in regional and so on, till

finally we attained International status. They showed Us their secrets, laid bare their files and books, and encouraged Us to form a library of previous writings on our selected subject to go along with our ever expanding collection.

Through them we became members of appropriate clubs and societies, which provided further opportunities to expand our data bank. The discussions became even more detailed and meaningful. Evenings spent in earnest disputation, hunched over a table with a drink in one hand, or perched on a wavering bar stool buying some delightful rarity, or jabbering with others in a smoke filled room became the height of our enjoyment.

We trusted these people. We revered them for their expert knowledge. We sought their advice. In return we shared with them the results of our own dusty research, thus increasing the understanding of both. They would hesitate to give out false information, and never did, because they were sure of their facts and took the time to confirm them. They prided themselves on their veracity and made certain they maintained it.

THE NEW PROFESSIONALS

Where did they come from, this new batch? It would seem that most of them found the lure of possible profit the motivating force. They do not seem to desire to pay their dues, as we did, by starting small, studying, learning all that could be learned, building that library of reference material, and then putting all to good use by filling their sales material with factual information. This venue could be an auction catalogue, a mail-sale brochure, a private treaty offer, a new advertisement, a published discussion or a monograph.

The smart ones could become expert in an area, a subject, a country or a specialty of some sort. This would require diligence, study, constant verbal interchanges with others, and a perpetual craving for excellence in the selected field. It might even involve creating an award winning collection. Sadly, few today give the appearance of attaining those heights or the desire to do so.

This is how I arrived at the dismal

thought that our new professionals are 'philatelically illiterate'. The old order is passing. As it is now, and also will be in the future, the experts of tomorrow will arise from the morass of the unlearned. Most of Us have tried to give others our findings, whenever we could sense a willing listener. Far too many of the 'lets make it now' group have spurned any attempt to be advised. Perhaps this monologue will shock some of them into a learning spasm.

To illustrate my point, consider these recent occurrences:

a) Lots 230-231, *Eastern Auctions Ltd.*, sale of Saturday, June 11, 1988

P #28 12¢ Trial colour plate proof pair on india in orange, VF.

P,B #32 1¢ Orange trial colour plate proof block on india, VF.

See Boggs, *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada*, Volume II, Appendix O, page 1-O, concerning POST CONTEMPORARY PROOFS. In spite of A.T.M.'s comment as to value, though not contemporary they are valuable. They are NOT color trial proofs.

b) Lot 226, same sale

O #22 8d Rose, used, VF

An improper cancel. See Pratt, *The Pence Issues of Newfoundland*, pages 124-125. Valid devices are illustrated and the included transparency showing cancellations makes identification easy. It should have been used before the description was written.

c) Lot 269, same sale

P,B #104 1¢ Cross-gutter trial color plate proof block of 24 in black on thin wove card (?), folded in gutter, the first cross-gutter block we've seen from this issue, a rare and important item, VF..(PH)

See *Additional Data on the Stamps of Newfoundland*, by Robert H. Pratt, *BNA TOPICS*, April 1969 and references cited. While 200-up plates are believed to have been prepared for the lithographed Guy issue, it is not positive that De La Rue could make or print 200-up engraved plates. The

Day Books of De La Rue do not substantiate plates of engraved Newfoundland stamps 200-up being printed. Two plates of 100-up could be printed together, but the gutter would not be constant.

d) Lot 305, same sale

E 15¢ Photographic Essay, complete design prepared for the 1931 permanent issue, very attractive, VF

See *Newfoundland Air Mails* by Dalwick and Harmer (Page 170), and the revised edition by Harmer (Page 171). This essay was made by the Canadian Bank Note Company. NOTE the heading on the stamp - it says it was for a 1940 issue!

e) Lot 147-148, *R. Maresch & Son*, sale of Wednesday, April 13, 1988

P 80-89: 1910 Guy Issue LITHOGRAPHED: 1 to 10¢ (9 vals) **PLATE PROOFS** in Blue in IMPERFORATE BLOCKS of 4 on wove gummed paper with full o.g., RARE
P 90: 12¢ Plate Proof in red in IMPERFORATE block of 4 on wove gummed paper, RARE n.h and v.f.

For a full description of these blocks of four for the Lithographed Guy issue, provided for Newfoundland officials, see *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 47, No. 1, January 1968, and subsequent issues. They are NOT plate proofs.

f) Lots 287-288, *R. Maresch & Son*, sale of Wednesday June 15, 1988

P 87: EIGHT CENT, PROOF block of 4 in color of issue on gummed wove paper.

P 90: EDWARD VIII, the 12¢ value, 5 COLOUR PROOFS, 4 IMPERF in different colours and one perforated in matching green, n.h., v.f.

See e) above - all except the 12¢ perf green, are from the same lot of color trials.

g) Lots 800-802, *F.E. Eaton & Sons*, sale of Saturday, July 30, 1988

p Newfoundland, 1865-1894 small group of Trial Color Plate Proofs, 19 stamps including 2 pairs with many different colours and shades, mostly on India paper, *though*

several finished perforated proofs are included on wove paper, condition is fine though some faults do exist, a valuable lot (19)

p #27, 10¢ blue, perforated trial color plate proof, gummed, v.f. and scarce (1).

p 10¢ lime green, perforated trial color plate proof, v.f., (1)

See the *Essays and Proofs of BNA* by Minuse and Pratt, pages 177-180. The story about the American Bank Note Trade Sample Sheets shows that some were perforated.

h) - *Newfoundland Travelling Post Office Cancellations*, Cyril Kidd & Philip Cockrill, Cockrill Series Booklet No. 48, 1987 Newbury, England

A series of major errors makes one suspicious of the entire publication:

* Page 3 - "Sir William Whitelaw ---", Should be "Sir William Whiteway as Attorney-General, --"

* Page 19 - "A recent check of road maps (1987) shows that there is still no road crossing the country between East and West." Strange, as the Trans-Canada Highway, Route 1, has carried traffic from Port-au-Basques to St. John's since being completed in 1966!

* Page 41 - "TRINITY BAY T.P.O. (St. John's to Trinity)" and others. All of the Bay T.P.O.'s ran within their Bays, delivering mail to towns that could not be serviced by the larger Coastal ships.

See *The Nineteenth Century Postal History of Newfoundland* by Robert H. Pratt, Collectors Club of New York, on various related subjects; *BNA TOPICS*, May-June 1988, page 23, *Caveat Emptor*; the BNAPS R.P.O. Study Group also have much to say about this peculiar publication.

i) *BNA TOPICS*, November-December 1987, Vol 44, #6, page 26, *Newfoundland Plate Numbers*, by John M. Walsh.

"What I have found is that the 1¢-5¢ values were printed in sheets of 200 subjects containing two panes of 100 stamps. The two panes were separated by a 24 mm gutter. When perforating the sheet of stamps the perforations would run across the gutter, thus making two types (inside

or outside) of the same plate number."

No other references or data are provided to substantiate the claim that plates of 200 subjects with a constant gutter were prepared. It is known that Perkins Bacon made their flat bed stamp plates '100-up' or 100 subjects to a plate. While printing at '200-up' with two plates could be and was sometimes done, the gutter would not be constant, and the location of the plate numbers either 'inside' or 'outside' would be happenstance. No criteria, other than perforations extending to the outside edge of one side of a stamp sheet, are provided so that other collectors can identify their plate blocks in like manner. This extension of perforations beyond either left or right edge (or for that matter top or bottom edge) is normal for many of the then existing COMB TYPE perforators, which were adjustable for width or height, and were not dedicated to one size stamp. There are no known standard inside/outside denominators.

j) *BNA TOPICS*, May-June 1988, Vol. 45, #3, page 32, *An Intriguing Newfoundland Air Mail Cover*, by John M. Walsh.

An interesting cover, not reported by Dalwick-Harmer. Probably correct, however the receiving date stamp at St. John's is not mentioned, or shown so that its authenticity could be checked. (It could be a Jy with a truncated tail which would look like a Ju, or a Jn which was a normal designation for June, or an upside down 'u' which would look like an 'n', or Ju which could also be July). No reference to newspapers is given to prove that a mail ship landed at St. John's on the date marked by the St. John's receiver, or the previous day. Transit from London on 26 June to St. John's in a minimum of five (5) days or a maximum of seven (7) days is certainly a possibility, but should be checked and substantiated. In discussing these finds every means of checking and proving the data correct should be carefully evaluated and reported. Note that *The Newfie News-*

letter, May/June 1988, *The Dornier DO-X Flight of 1932*, by Bert Warr Jr. mentions a cover with the same date.

k) Lot 356, *Sissons Stamp Auction*, July 1988

1965/96, 1/2c/24c FIRST CENTS COLLECTION, mostly much above the average and almost all OG and VG-VF (24-7, 28A-52, 55-60)

First, 1965 should be 1865. Second, the First Cents Issue ends with Scott #40. From there on (1880) the stamps were prepared by the British American Bank Note Company, and are no longer from the First Cents Issue. See Boggs, Newfoundland.

And so it goes, ON and On and on.

SO, WHAT'S IT TO YOU ?

Well - if you are one of *Us*, or even if you are one of 'them', if you buy or sell philatelic material, or if you do both, or even if you are just an observer at any stamp show, you will find that your best friend is *detailed and factual knowledge* of your selected area of interest.

One of the best ways to obtain this security is to study the philatelic literature. The most comprehensive listing of printed material that I know of, for British North American stamp issuing colonies, is contained in Cimon Morin's two volumes, published by the National Library of Canada, *Canadian Philately Bibliography and Index 1864 - 1973*, and its sequel, *Canadian Philately Bibliography and Index - Supplement*.

With this source as a guide, it will be possible to form your own library. Your bookshelves can be filled by adding suitable material from the *Bibliography*. Many auctions list books, catalogue groups, article reprints, and other philatelic reading material for sale. Bidding on these lots is a good way to obtain literature directed toward a specific area. Your town library may contain volumes of interest.

What ever means is taken to have written material (facts) at hand, the time to peruse it and the money to secure it will be well spent. One can never have too many facts (but be sure that they are in-

deed true facts). They can be money savers as well as nodes for conversation.

All this reminds me of a story I once heard about a city man, new to farming, who was sold a 'superb heifer', only to find out later that it was, in fact, a goat. Wrong information in philatelic publications, the contents of which are often taken as gospel, could easily result in a collector owning a goat. Caveat emptor!

Ian Robertson, in his summation of an article in the *Canadian Stamp News* of June 21, 1988, where he advocated learn-

ing our hobby by reading available literature, said:

"The best lessons I learned from my experiences were:

- * Never assume anything, including a friend's knowledge.

- * Be patient and willing to spend time examining and researching.

- * You'll enjoy the hobby more by reading."

I think he has said it all.

CALENDAR

CALENDAR lists exhibitions and bourses with significant BNA content, and BNAPS Regional Group functions. Information/Prospectus must reach the Editor at least 3 months in advance.

OCTOBER 14-16, CALGARY, ALBERTA - CALTAPEX '88, Calgary Philatelic Society show and bourse. Marlborough Inn. Information: P.O. Box 1478, Stn. M, Calgary AB T2P 2L6

OCTOBER 15, GUELPH, ONTARIO - GUELPHPEX '88, Guelph Stamp Club show and bourse. St. James Junior High School, 57 Victoria Rd. N. Information: D. Odegard, 54 Lyon, Guelph, ON N1H 5C6

OCTOBER 15-16, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA - VANPEX 1988, British Columbia Philatelic Society show and bourse. South Vancouver Royal Canadian Legion, 727A E. 49th Ave. Information: L. Upton, 607 E. 6th St., North Vancouver, BC V7L 1R4

OCTOBER 22, LONDON, ONTARIO - MIDDPEX '88, Middlesex Stamp Club show and bourse. White Oaks Mall, Wellington Rd. S. Information: Middpex '87, 177 Millbank Dr., London, ON N6C 4V6

NOVEMBER 18-20, VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA - VAPEX '88, Virginia Philatelic Federation show and bourse. Virginia Beach Pavilion Convention Center. BNAPS' Mid-Atlantic Regional Group Fall meeting. Information: VAPEX '87, P.O. Box 16361, Alexandria, VA 22302

DECEMBER 3, STONEY CREEK, ONTARIO - Stoney Creek Stamp Club show and bourse. Fiesta Mall, Hwy. 8. Information: P.O. Box 9343, Stoney Creek, ON L8G 4S1

1989

JANUARY 13-15, TORONTO, ONTARIO - PHILEX, International dealer's bourse, seminars. Sheraton Centre. Information: David B. Bastedo, Box 980, Stn. K, Toronto, ON M4P 2V3

JULY 7-17, PARIS, FRANCE - PHILEXFRANCE '89. FIP sanctioned International Exhibition. Exhibition Park of Paris, Porte de Versailles. Canadian Commissioner: J.E. Kraemer, 17 Commanche Dr., Ottawa, ON K2E 6E8

BNAPEX '89

HAMILTON, ONTARIO, September 22-24, BNAPS' Annual Convention. Sheraton Hamilton. Bourse (deposit:\$50) and hotel suite reservations are now being accepted. Chairman: Mike Street, P.O. Box 7230, Ancaster, ON L9G 3N6

OCTOBER 4-8, AYR, SCOTLAND - the Canadian Philatelic Society of Great Britain's annual convention. Station Hotel. Information: John Hillson, 52 Stamperland Gardens, Clarkston, Glasgow, Scotland G76 8HG.

1990-1991

BNAPEX '90: GALVESTON, TX

BNAPEX '91: VANCOUVER, BC