

NEWFOUNDLAND POSTAL STATIONERY:

Author's Reply

by Robert Pratt, OTB

Part II

A Born Again Methuselah *The Omniscient One*

Episode Two - This attempted mastication of my effort to define the introduction of the postcards made by the British American Bank Note Company, deserves several rebuttals. One is tied to Mr. Walton's remarkable means of knowing exactly what I did, when I did it, what others did, and all at a meeting to which he was neither invited nor attended. The other raises a very interesting question on a matter about die numbers that previously I had given little thought to.

Consider this, Mr. Walton writes:-

The 'files' to which he refers are British American Bank Notes 'reference book' of Die Proofs. This Book was not kept contemporaneously, and in fact appears to have been reconstructed - based on this writers research - on a sort of a best guess basis around 1909. The 'best guesses' were often not too accurate. For example the Newfoundland proof for the 1880 postal adhesives are numbered and entered just prior to the Canadian Bill stamps of 1868. Again Pratt was told the die proof numbers (without questioning the provenance of the document), or examined it only in a narrow sense (looking just at the line information for the Newfoundland entries).

Lets for the fun of it, examine the date of *this writer's research*. If it was 1909, and one must suppose the writer was at least twenty three years old in order to have the desire and funds with which to carry out research, he is today a fine and robust 103 years young. I will admit he doesn't look a day over 90, and if I were to guess his age I should say somewhere between 55 and 65. So - when was the research done and for what purpose? If the book was reconstructed in 1909, why are there so many missing items? Where are the proofs for the Large and Small Queens mentioned? This

is the missing data that should be studied. Nowhere can I find die numbers for either of these issues of stamps which began in 1868 and ended, with one exception, in 1876. Strangely, there is another Die #122, which is the same number as the Die for the postcard Mr. Walton calls P4 (2¢). This one is a vignette, undoubtedly for a banknote, under the title of *A Fishing Smack*, and with a Montreal designation. It is in my collection.

Now for the second amazing revelation. All of Mr. Walton's statements regarding the presentation and study of the die proofs are the products of his active and wondrous imagination. Here if the way I remember it happening:-

It was in the fall of 1973 or 1974, and the day after I attended a meeting of the Canadian Postal Museum Advisory Board. I was entertained at a delightful lunch with several executives of the Bank Note Company at a local watering hole. After an interesting discussion of philatelic matters, we returned to the Bank Note Co. office and there I was shown a table full of proof material relating to Newfoundland. A record register or book was not in the exhibit. I started to make notes and was advised that they were unnecessary, as they would make sure I was properly informed of the die proofs and related information. With that I returned home. Several weeks later an interesting package arrived from the Company. In it were a set of photographic replicas of the proof material I had seen, and also replicas of many I had not known of. Above each black and white photo was inscribed in manuscript the die number, and if known the roller number used in the transfer process. There was no mention of the Canada Bill Stamps of 1868, no book to refer to - and from what I had been told and later saw, no reason to question the provenance of the die numbers. Do I tell cooperative people with source information that they are wrong? No way. How nice that Mr. Walton knows what I was shown, what I was told and what I saw. He must be omniscient.

I offer this possible solution for the Die Register. Perhaps there was one in use at Ottawa,

starting at the beginning in 1866. On the move to Montreal in 1871, the book and certain dies and plates, now unused, remained in Ottawa. A new book was started in Montreal, beginning (where else) with number 1. On the move back to Ottawa in 1889, the presence of two register books complicated the situation and resulted in the present mixup.

I still stick to my thesis that the 2c Postcard may have been produced ahead of the 1c. I am NOT going to get into an argument regarding the colour of the stock on which the cards were printed. Age, storage conditions, exposure, environment, pollution and many other events can alter the base colour over a period of time. Perhaps the London Society made my dates of issue realistic.

The Unmasked Modern Crusader Don Quixote Rides Again

Episode One - Item Two - I have difficulty in understanding this item. What is Mr. Walton attempting to prove? Why would any intelligent person challenge the written statement of the person that engineered the entrance of Newfoundland into the Universal Postal Union? The Postmaster General of Newfoundland was responsible for selecting the date at which time he would be fully capable of carrying out the mandates of the Conventions. This he did, and reported to his superior in the opening statement of his annual report for the year 1878, dated March 1, 1879, and published in the Appendix of the Journal of the Assembly, page 619, in the year 1879, as follows:-

Sir,-

I have the honour to submit, for the information of the Governor in Council and both branches of the Legislature, my Nineteenth Annual Report of the Post Office Department, with accompanying returns, Nos. 1 to 10, for the year ended 31st December 1878.

This year, 1879, commences a new era in our postal system, by the admission of Newfoundland into the Universal Postal Union on the first day of January, and I cannot do better than give the following extract from report of Postmaster General, United States, which says:-

"The Universal Postal Convention (a copy of which is appended) was duly ratified and approved by and with the advice and consent of the President, on 13th August

1878, and will be carried into operation on 1st April 1879, --"

It is most difficult to disagree with John Delaney, further the attached reference to the United States action illustrates the obvious fact that passage of a convention and action under it are not simultaneous. So much for Newfoundland joining in 1878.

If that is not enough, there is a very fine article by Charles Gordon in the *Stamp News* of May 1986, pages 71-75. Its title - *Universal Postal Union - The Dates of Joining 1874 - 1974*. There also is a list prepared by the G.P.O. London, dated around 1898 which contains the 1879 date for Newfoundland. If Mr. Walton relied on the book published by William Tyrrell in 1975, titled *The Universal Postal Union*, he picked a very poor source. On page 52 Tyrrell combined Newfoundland (erroneously called a Province) with Canada and on page 15 showed Canada as entering in 1878, which is correct for Canada but not for Newfoundland.

A Rose is a Rose is a Rose But a proof may not be an Essay

Episode One - Item One - The Scott Catalogue is reviled for many reasons, but it does have an interesting introduction which is both good and bad. One of the least noticed but important misconceptions in the introduction, is its definition of an Essay. The statement is far too broad, and leaves no room for defining Progress Proofs from an Incomplete State of an Unfinished Die. These proofs are used by an engraver to show him the results of his endeavors, or by the contractor to allow the choice of a printing colour, or perhaps (as in this case) to ease, by printing in different colours, the task of selecting between several designs of shading, or other variations in the master die. In these cases the proofs are called Colour Trials in the shortened version. Mr. Walton's beautiful green goodie (Not an Essay) was not overlooked, in fact, I never looked for it. It was already included in the listing for card No. 1. As can be seen by examining the table for No. 1, four different trial colours, all with different degrees of shading, were provided for someone to make a selection. The Brown colour was approved, and the Green Postcards (The colour of a 1c stamp) were produced in this image. It's nice to know the proper name of your child.

Is Management Managing ??
A happy tail always wags its dog

Episode One - Item Zero - It is my belief that the Publisher of a magazine or paper is the source of policy for that medium. The means of advising the readers of the policy is through the Editorial Page, where the Editor presents the instructions of his superior in approved form. Unless a disclaimer is appended to the statement attributed to the creator of the policy, usually the Publisher. In this case the Publisher, called management, is considered to be the elected officials of the Society, with the President as the CEO responsible to the membership for the activities and actions of the Society as directed by the Board of Governors.

With that definition in mind, the following quotation from The EDITOR'S PAGE of the January-February 1989 Issue of *BNA TOPICS*, under the title of *Summing Up* raises interesting questions.

"I must agree with Jeff Switt's criticism of the tone of Pratt's piece. It wasn't right. Elsewhere in this issue you will find the first installment of a series by William C. Walton. By an amazing coincidence (some might call it a form

of poetic justice), Walton's series concerns Robert Pratt's articles on *Newfoundland Postal Stationery* which ran in *TOPICS* from 1984 to 1986. As will be seen, he not only adds new information to the original series, but also brings to light and corrects items on which Pratt went astray. The manner in which Walton does this shows that it is quite possible to point out errors without firing artillery."

Is this a statement of policy by the Management? Do we now have to follow Mr. Walton's method of correction, complete with misinformation and multi-repetition of the offending authors name? Does management agree with the former Editor's advocacy of the authors approach? If this is the editors personal opinion, why not say so? Why is it necessary for him to get into the act anyway - self promotion, publicity, as a do-gooder, or what? It's not his fight!

I find the "new information" to be mostly a rehash of prior knowledge in the hands of others, and the statement "amazing coincidence" extremely artificial - who arranged the coincidence?

The above questions should be answered. Will the be? Is management interested in what appears in its magazine?

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