

The Queen Alexandra 3¢ Value of Newfoundland's 1897 Royal Family Visit

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It is a beautiful image of Queen Alexandra, with its orange color providing a glowing loveliness. The purpose of this article is to provide a survey of what is known of this value and to provide some new observations based upon detailed measurements of its framed image.

This stamp was originally issued in 1898. A number of printings followed through 1905. It was reissued in 1918. The value originally prepaid the Canada mail rate until December 25, 1898 when that rate was reduced to 2¢. It also was used to prepay the inland mail rate, until July 1, 1906. Additionally, the value covered the registration charge for mail sent locally during this period. Lastly, it was needed in 1918 when the war tax act increased the cost of one ounce inland and Canadian mail from 2¢ to 3¢.

Many writers have published information on this stamp. Their main points are summarized in this article.

Bertram Poole and Harry Huber in *Postage Stamps of Newfoundland*, point out that when a color change for the 2¢ of the Royal Family issue was made in 1898, the original 3¢ Queen Alexandra was also issued. They comment that there was very little in shade variations of any of the denominations except for the 1¢ green. It was further reported that in February, 1902, a sheet of the 3¢ entirely imperforate was sold at the post office in St. John's, but that the sheet was immediately cut into vertical strips. In 1907, there was a consignment on thinner paper.

The book also points out that at the time of the 1918 extra postage charge (mentioned above) there were only 200,000 of the 3¢ in stock. The only recourse was to have the American Banknote Company, in New York, make a new printing from the old 3¢ plate in their possession. The ordered stamps arrived at St. John's in late June, 1918. They were reddish orange and on paper of bluish tinge, which distinguished them from earlier printings.

In *Holmes' Specialized Philatelic Catalogue*, 11th Edition, the 3¢ is listed imperforate and imperforate horizontally. The editors state one die proof of each Royal Family value may exist and that plate proofs do exist of all values on proof paper in the color of issue.

The Stanley Gibbons Catalogue, 1991, lists the June, 1898 orange as well as a red orange version on bluish paper, from June 1918.

Winthrop Boggs in *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Newfoundland*, makes the following comments on the 3¢ value:

- * the stamp was printed in sheets of 100 (10 x 10);
- * there is a die proof on thin wove paper;
- * there is also a die proof on white card;
- * it exists imperforate;
- * it's known to perforate horizontally;
- * there are vertical pairs, imperforate between; and
- * a reddish orange version on bluish white paper came out in June, 1918.

Robson Lowe in *The Encyclopedia of British Empire Postage Stamps, North America, Vol. V*, makes the following observations:

- * the 3¢ orange was issued in 1898;
- * plate numbers are 3 and 4;
- * there are imprints below each stamp and in the lower margin;
- * quantities issued are unknown to the writer;
- * there is a die proof (die C372) die sunk on large card in the issued color;
- * there is a plate proof in color of issue on card, on wove or on India;
- * there are imperforate X perforate pairs;
- * there is an orange 1918 wartime printing on bluish paper from the original A.B.N.Co. plate.

Robert Pratt in *BNA Topics*, May/June 1981, contributed the following:

- * the dates ordered, quantity, invoice dates, and costs;
- * an imperforate plate proof exists, without gum, on proof paper or card in issued color;
- * there are plate numbers UL3 reversed and UL4 reversed with F5610;
- * there are large die proofs in color of issue;
- * there are imperforate horizontal pairs;
- * there are copies overprinted SPECIMEN; and
- * he comments on previous authors (cited above) relating to the 1918 reissue, but wasn't able to document nor to find any other source for verification.

Ed Wener, in his *Indigo* price lists provided articles on all the 1897 Royal Family issue, using the sheets overprinted SPECIMEN, sold in 1990 by the A.B.N.Co. at Christie's Auctions. Studying the 3¢ values, he comments:

- * there are sheets from three different plates;
- * there are no plate numbers on plate #1 and it has vertical separations between rows of 4mm and horizontal (between columns) of 2½mm;
- * there is a constant variety at position #58 with two dots in the "D" of Newfoundland;
- * the 1905 printing involves a different plate with layout 3mm apart between rows and columns 3½mm apart - in other words, the sheets are shorter and wider, while it also has guidelines between the 5th and 6th columns and 5th and 6th rows, but no plate #'s;
- * he claims to have seen an upper right plate #3 corner block without specimen and guesses that the 1905 sheets are from plate #3;
- * the 3¢ die was still available in 1918 for the War printing and a new plate was prepared, consisting of two panes of 100 subjects separated by a gutter; however, the rows on the 1918 printing are 3mm apart, being narrower than the 1905 printing;
- * the taller 3¢ Alexandras come from plate #1 and are taller because of the 4mm vertical spacing between rows, whereas the shorter stamps came from either the 1905 printing or 1918 printing on plates with only 3mm row separation;
- * these short stamps on thin off-white paper in a very reddish orange shade are from the 1905 printing while other short stamps, less reddish orange on better paper, are from the 1918 printing.

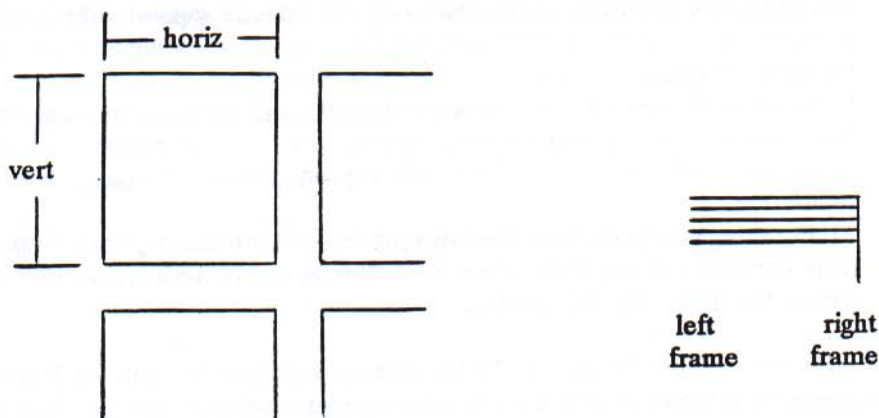
From the same 1990 auction, the Canadian government acquired the 3¢ orange as imperforate sheet of 100 with a bottom margin imprint inscription. They also bought a 200-subject sheet with center gutter, imperforate, with two bottom inscriptions (one on bottom center of each pane), and with plate number 4 reversed in the upper right corner of the right pane, but with no plate markings on the left pane. Another acquisition was 100 subjects, imperforate, overprinted SPECIMEN, and with plate number 2 reversed in the upper left corner. Finally, they bought a green trail color plate proof on card, 100 subjects, with a bottom margin inscription and plate number 3 reversed in the upper left corner.

Additionally, from a private collection, we have seen:

- * UL plate 3 reversed;
- * UR plate 4 reversed;
- * UR plate 4 reversed, with F5610;
- * UR plate F5610; and
- * a left pane having only F5610 in upper right corner with gutter plus cutting demarcations, while the right pane has F5610 in the upper right corner plus 4 reversed in the right margin.

The preceding does not clearly distinguish between the earlier printings and the 1918 issue. However, it would seem that size is part of the solution. So what are the sizes of the stamp designs for earlier printings compared to the 1918 War Printings? With this in mind a measurement of the 3¢ Queen Alexandra was undertaken. The stamps were measured from outer left frame line to outer right, and as well from top to bottom frame lines. See the illustration for this and vertical and horizontal separations between subjects.

Note also there are fine, horizontal lines at frame left and frame right. On the left side there are openings between the lines, while on the right they are closed at the vertical frame line. All stamps measured show the right closed lines, except the die proofs with die #C372, which show closure at both sides.



ILLUSTRATION

The following chart is presented.

3¢ Alexandra Measurements

Item	Horiz mm	Vert mm	Between Columns	Between Rows
Black die proof C372 on glazed paper	19.5	25.9		
Large die proof C372, orange	19.3	25.4		
Plate proof + imprint, orange	19.5	25.7	2½, 3	3.7

Dated specimens ABNC archives per Wener. Date ordered.				
a. 1898, May 9th	19.3	25.9		
b. 1899, Oct 12th	19.3	25.9		
c. 1901, March 30th	19.3	25.9		
d. 1902, April 29th	19.3	25.9		
e. 1903, specimen date, Nov.	19.3	25.9		
f. 1905, Nov 10th	19.3	25.4		
g. 1918 left pane, May 16th	19.5	25.7		
h. 1918 right pane, May 16th	19.5	25.7		
UL plate 3 (R)	19.5	25.4	3, 3½	3
UR plate 4 (R) with F5610	19.5	25.7	2½, 3	3
UL plate F5610 left pane spec.	19.5	25.7	3	3
UR plate 4(R) F5610, right pane spec.	19.5	25.7	3	3
Imprint pair, horizontal	19.3	25.9		
Vertical pair, imperf. horiz. with imprint	19.3	25.9		3.7
Mint, pale orange with mottled paper	19.3	25.4		
Mint, red orange, bluish mottled paper and selvage	19.3	25.4		
Deep orange, sharp detail	19.3	25.9		
Orange, sharp detail	19.3	25.9		
COVERS BY FRAMESIZE				
Single, Dec.13/00	19.3	25.9		
Horiz. strip of five May 1/01	19.3	25.9		
Vert. pair, imperf. Nov.23/01	19.3	25.9		
Horiz. pair, reg, 1904	19.3	25.9		
Aug. 9/98	19.5	25.7		

Oct. 17/98	19.5	25.7		
Nov. 3/02	19.5	25.7		
March 24/03	19.5	25.7		
Dec. 30/03	19.5	25.7		
Dec. 7/04	19.5	25.7		
Oct. 31/05	19.5	25.7		
March 13/06, appears reddish orange	19.5	25.7		
May 6/06	19.5	25.7		
Nov. 23/18, unlike below	19.5	25.7		
Feb. 28/19, red orange, mottled bluish color to paper	19.5	25.7		
April 20/06	19.3	25.4		
Sept. 23/98	19.3	25.9		
July 5/02 (two singles)	19.3	25.9		

Here is a summary of the findings:

- A. Both left and right frame lines found only on black die and large orange die, both with die #C372 - all other stamp images have only right frame line;
- B. Measuring between columns is unreliable as separations differ on sheets;
- C. Stamp image sizes differ. When found on cover, image size seems to show no preference to a specific year;
- D. Four stamp image sizes are found - 19.3mm x 25.9mm, 19.5mm x 25.7mm, 19.3mm x 25.4mm, and 19.3mm x 25.9mm;
- E. The black die with die #C372 has a unique image size of 19.5mm x 25.9mm.

In conclusion, it seems fruitless to create a separate listing of the 3¢ Alexandra for the 1918 reissue, based upon image size; however, listing four distinct sizes as sub-units might be a possibility.

A question that begs to be asked ...Why the black die with die #C372, is so different than anything issued?

Further research would also be helpful regarding the initial appearance of the reddish orange version of the 3¢.

Your thoughts are, as always, welcomed. Please direct them to the authors c/o 9 Guy Street, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1B 1P4. Telephone (709) 722 3476 fax/voice.

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