

# An Essay Find for the Newfoundland Thirteen-cent of 1865

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A few years ago I decided to switch my specialty from BNA proofs to imperforate pairs. In order to prepare for auction I began by inspecting my Newfoundland collection for faults and using "Essays and Proofs of British North America" by Pratt & Minuse to catalog it properly. Most of the "Newfies" were of the first cents issue and had been acquired through a Nassau Street (NYC) dealer. He told me they had come from a descendant of an American Bank Note Company engraver. Among them were the five-cent essays "Province of Newfoundland" seal and Prince Albert. Many of the common plate proofs bore the ABN imprint.

Then I came to the thirteen-cent which was unlisted as it was a black small die on India (Fig. 1). Next to it was a normal color plate proof (Fig. 2). There seemed to be a difference in design. The flag at the ship's stern on the die proof was wrong. Under magnification I saw eight stripes and a field in one corner - not at all the way a Union Jack should look! Obviously it was supposed to be a U.S. ensign. There were other differences: the plate proof had diagonal shading added in the clouds, land, and water; additional lines added in the clouds and water; and existing lines in sails, sky, and water strengthened.

A letter went immediately to Bob Pratt, a Newfoundland expert, who at the time was President of the late, lamented Essay/Proof Society. He had never seen this "proof" and agreed that it had to be a hitherto unknown essay. He urged me to report it. It had been shown to Ken Minuse some years earlier. He had put it down in his notebook as a small trial color die proof - for inclusion in a possible update of the catalog - but neither of us had noticed the strange flag.

I wanted to know the history of this essay, contacted the ABN, and was referred to Aurelia Chen, their Product Manager. She found a black trail color die proof in the archives but nothing resembling my essay. As a photo was not permitted she sent me a photostat of this unlisted item (Fig. 3). In a demonstration of serendipity, while searching the archives for another project she found a compound die proof (Fig. 4). The lower portion (Fig. 5) became the vignette for my essay! She told me the compound die had been executed by an unrecorded engraver at the Philadelphia firm of Bald, Cousland & Company which merged with other companies to form ABN in 1858.

Without doubt this essay was submitted to the postal authorities in St. John's

for approval in the competition for the 1865 contract won by ABN, although no record of it seems to exist. Bob Pratt informed me that such material was destroyed by the Ottawa postal officials after its transfer from St. John's when Newfoundland became a province in 1949.

Nevertheless, sets of photos were sent to the National Postal Museum, The Canadian Postal Archives, the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the National Postal Museum in London, England with little feedback and no help.

The readership of the Essay/Proof Journal was unable to locate any additional copies of 30E. Perhaps BNAPS members will have better luck!

This experience rekindled my interest in proofs, more of which are available following the ABN auction. I never did submit them to an auction.

Figure 1



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

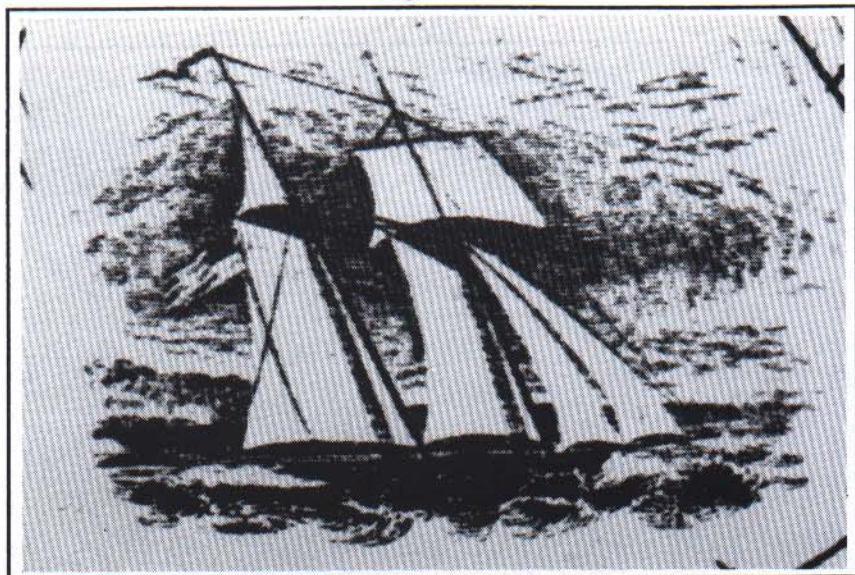


Figure 6.

