

Newfoundland's 1897 1¢ Postal Shortage

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Much has been written about Newfoundland's 1897 postal shortage and the contretemps leading to it. Robert Pratt did a learned study on this topic in 1986, for example. My intent here is not to repeat but to add, focusing primarily upon the October, 1897 adhesives with a census by the five types I describe (one not previously mentioned in any stamp catalogue), delineating their known dates of use during the provisional period, and describing the characteristics of the type most often counterfeited.

"The very gravest inconvenience has been inflicted upon the public by the P.O. being out of the commonest kinds of stamps. There is the worst kind of blundering evidenced in this and it is hoped the authorities will be prompt and secure another supply before long."

- St. John's Evening Herald, Sept. 30, 1897

PART 1: GENESIS OF THE SHORTAGE

With the financial success of United States' Columbian issue of 1892 and Canada's announcement of the 1897 Diamond Jubilee issue to honor the Queen, Newfoundland's Colonial Secretary, Robert Bond, decided his colony should get into the act. Cabot had discovered the island in 1497, and the 400th anniversary provided Newfoundland the opportunity to honor Cabot, publicize the colony, and hopefully reap some philatelic profits. With marching orders in hand, P.M.G. J.O. Fraser set to work.

On June 24, 1897, a 14-stamp set was issued. The 1¢ paid homage to Queen Victoria, and the balance of the set, to the 60¢ value, Cabot, industry, wildlife, and King Henry VII. 400,000 copies of the 1¢ were produced. The plates were destroyed shortly thereafter, preventing additional orders. Although my goal in this article is not to evaluate the success of this undertaking, the overall set did not do as well as anticipated, even given the attractiveness of several of the individual stamps. Some of the higher values were still on sale at the G.P.O. 35 years later!

The low values did sell rapidly. Some lay this at the feet of philatelic speculators, but 1¢ usage, in particular, was high by this time, for local letters, newspapers, and circulars at the third class unsealed rate. Monthly demand was between 75,000 and 100,000! Consequently, by September 10, 1897, there were only 15,000 of the 1¢ left, and with no prospect of reordering, a crisis emerged.

With all 1¢ stamps rapidly disappearing and a different 1¢ issue from the American Bank Note Company somehow delayed, desperate measures were required. It was decided to surcharge the 1890 3¢ Victoria with ONE CENT. The 3¢'s were ubiquitous, and dull as well in appearance — an instance of supply exceeding demand. Sometime in September this decision was made, and sometime in October the provisionals were ready for use.

PART 2: THE FIRST PROVISIONALS - TYPE AND CENSUS

The overprinting was done locally in St. John's at the offices of the official newspaper, the ROYAL GAZETTE. 40,000 were done (800 half sheets of 50) but there was not

enough type for exactitude, so a number of different varieties were created. Grey and grey violet stock of the multi-hued Victoria were used. The five different setting types are as follows:

Type I. Short, thick serifed letters. Bars between 17.75 and 18.2 mm apart;

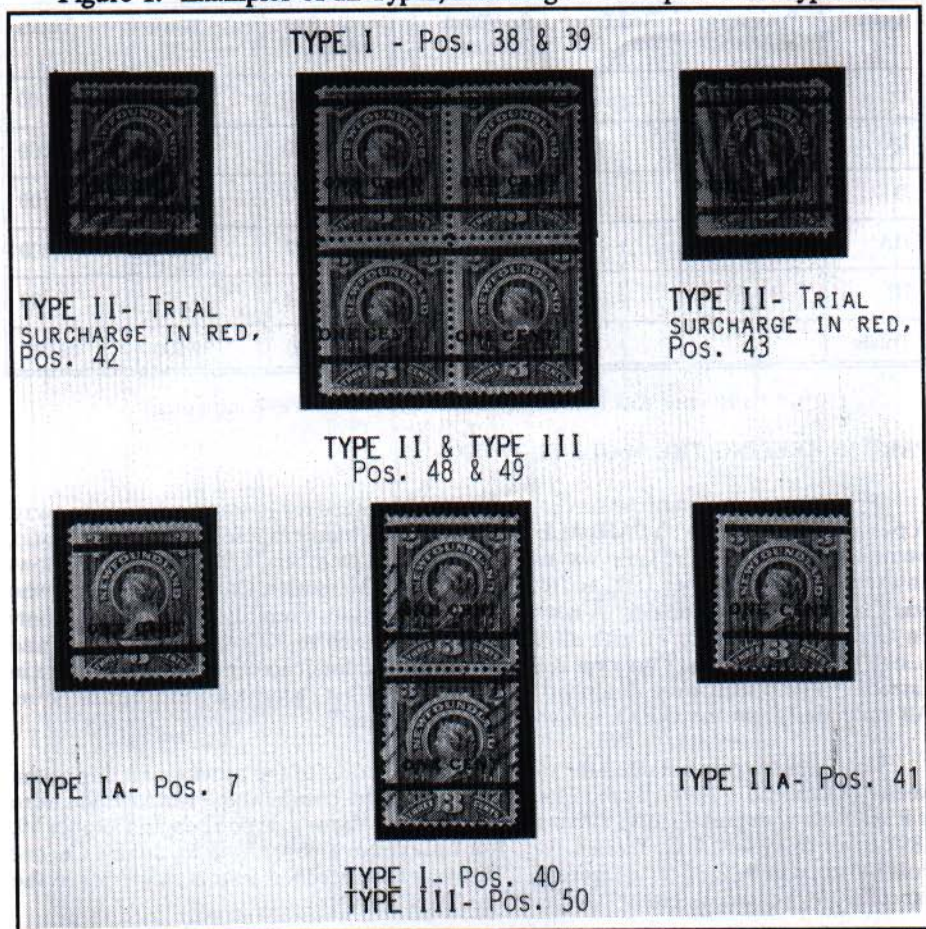
Type IA. Same as above, but bars only 17 mm apart;

Type II. Tall, thin letters, 1.25 mm between ONE and CENT;

Type IIA. Same, but 2 mm between ONE and CENT; and

Type III. Gothic letters (sans serifs).

Figure 1. Examples of all Types, including two red proofs of Type II.



Trial proofs were made in red, doubled red, and red and black. Some of these proofs were given by postal officials to friends, and a few were used on cover. Figure 2 shows a 50-cliche proof sheet in red on buff. It came from a collection sold by Martha Krippner, the elderly daughter of the composer of the Newfoundland national anthem, E. R. Krippner, in San Rafael, California about ten years ago. Krippner and his son (L.L.) sold a number of proof items back in the 1920's, according to correspondence that Robert Pratt cites in his 1986 article. Access to some of this proof material has helped me with plating and measurements (see PART 4).

Table 1 provides a census of the 40,000 overprints, by type.

Table 1.

1897 PROVISIONAL OVERPRINTS *

Type	Position(s) in setting	Red Proof	Red/Black Proof	Double Red Proof	Black	Totals
I	11-40	120	60	60	23,760	24,000
IA	1-10	40	20	20	7,920	8,000
II	42-48	28	14	14	5,544	5,600
IIA	41	4	2	2	792	800
III	49-50	8	4	4	1,584	1,600
Totals		200	100	100	39,600	40,000

* Based upon data from Robert Pratt. See text for **TYPE** attributes.

PART 3: KEEPING THE MAILS FLOWING

Prior to the creation of the surcharged stamps, the need for 1¢ stamps did not go away. A postal rubber stamp with **PAID ALL** on it was used. Thanks to research by Dean Mario, we now know the rubber stamp was used as early as September 24, 1897. Figure 3 shows an example from October 15th, addressed to E.M. Le Messurier, Chief Postal Clerk, who was a sometime stamp dealer. A bisected 2¢ orange codfish was also used, one day only on October 2nd (Figure 4), with all apparently addressed to P.G. Tessier, attorney and "...one of Newfoundland's greatest collectors and specialists," according to a reference in Jarrett's. The bisects were described as unauthorized but "accepted", in Robson Lowe. All emanated from the G.P.O. -- favors by Le Messurier?

Local newspapers heralded the rush on G.P.O.'s stocks of the provisionals during the week of October 17, 1897. By the 21st, they could not be bought at the windows but were still available with postal clerks affixing them. Figure 5 shows a Type II on an October 19, 1897 cover to (again) P.G. Tessier, Esq. But I also have a cover from St. John's Central Post Office, dated "Oc 5 97" (Figure 6). This may have resulted from a slug error in the canceller, and could be either "Oc 25 97" or "Nov 5 97."

There is uncertainty as to the first day of use of these stamps. The 19th is generally

accepted, but it was a Tuesday. Those of us enamored by these issues are looking for a cover postmarked the 18th, but it either does not exist or simply has been elusive.

Figure 2. Printer's proof sheet of 50 in red on buff paper.

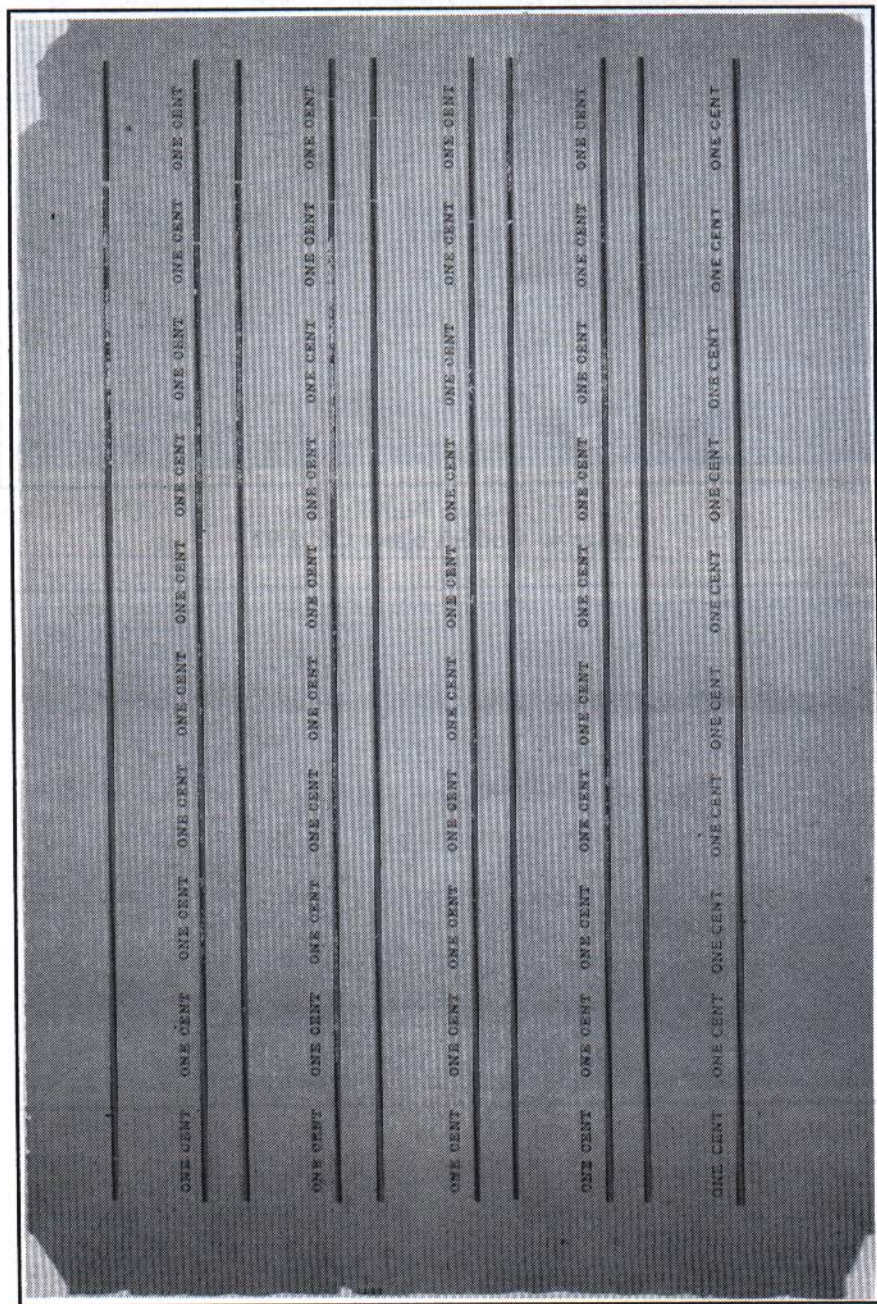


Figure 3. PAID ALL cover, OC 15 97.

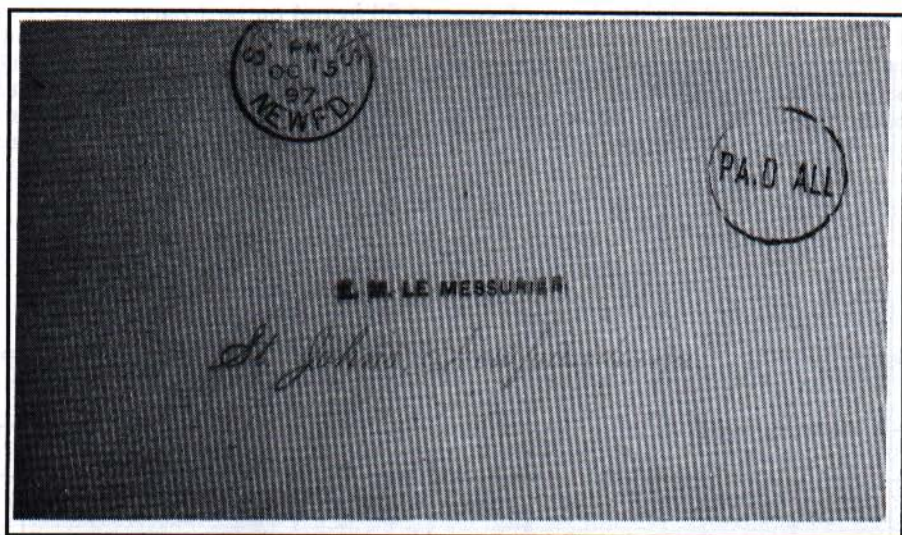


Figure 4. Codfish bisect OC 2 97.



Figure 5. Type II on first day of use, OC 19 97.



Figure 6. Type I used OC 5 (?) 97.



Pratt suggested a search for usage dates, and I have done that, with the help of other BNAPS members, and articles in the NEWFIE NEWSLETTER. Table 2 is the result.

Table 2.

1897 USE OF PAID ALL & PROVISIONAL ISSUES UNTIL
AVAILABILITY OF 1¢ VICTORIA ON SATURDAY, DEC.4.

PAID ALL	SCOTT #75-77 USAGE	SUNDAYS
9-24	10-19	9-26
9-27	10-20	10-3
9-29	10-21	10-10
10-1	10-22	10-17
10-2	10-23	10-24
10-12	10-25	10-31
10-13	10-27	11-7
10-14	10-29	11-4
10-15	11-1	11-21
10-16	11-2	11-28
10-18	11-5	
10-20	11-8	
10-21	11-10	
11-3	11-11	
11-4	11-12	
11-26	11-22	
11-27	11-27	
12-4	12-3	

PAID ALL used exclusively through 10-18. Provisionals used **solely** on 10-19.
PAID ALL used to supplement them from 10-20.

It chronicles the use of the **PAID ALL** rubber stamp and the surcharged stamps. I am now convinced that the 19th is the first day. Note the use of the rubber stamp through the 18th, **not** on the 19th, but again starting the 20th. I believe this means there were enough stamps available on the 19th to satisfy postal needs (and instant speculators), but already, by the 20th, the **PAID ALL** was needed to supplement the adhesives. This, of course, constitutes "evidence" but not "proof". The issue is still open, and readers of this may still be able to solve this century-old question.

The 1¢ rate was needed for newspapers, drop covers and the circular rate. Figure 7 provides an example of usage of Type I on a wrapper. Figure 8 shows the scarce Type III on a third class (unsealed) letter to Montreal. Heaviest documented usage is from late October. While purchases of the stamps became heavily controlled by late October, there was nothing stopping previous purchasers from using the adhesives whenever they wanted. This can explain the continued, but declining examples. Table 2. shows neither **PAID ALL** nor provisionals on cover for various periods in November (e.g. November 13-20), however. One would then assume there should be more specimens of covers with the **PAID ALL** rubber stamps for November but we find no known examples between

November 5th and the 22nd. Why is that?

Figure 7. Type I on wrapper (undated).

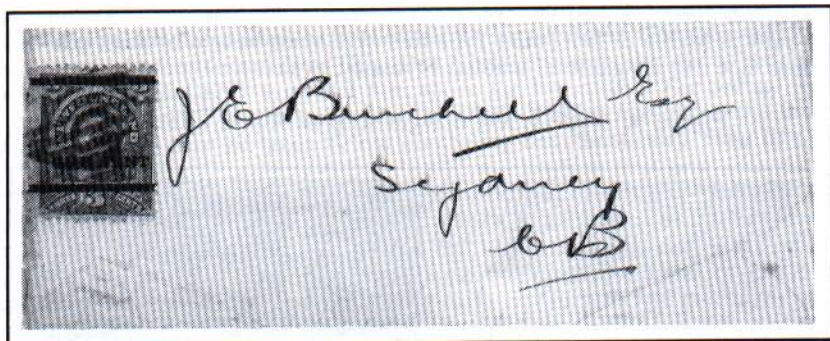


Figure 8. Type III, OC 22 97.



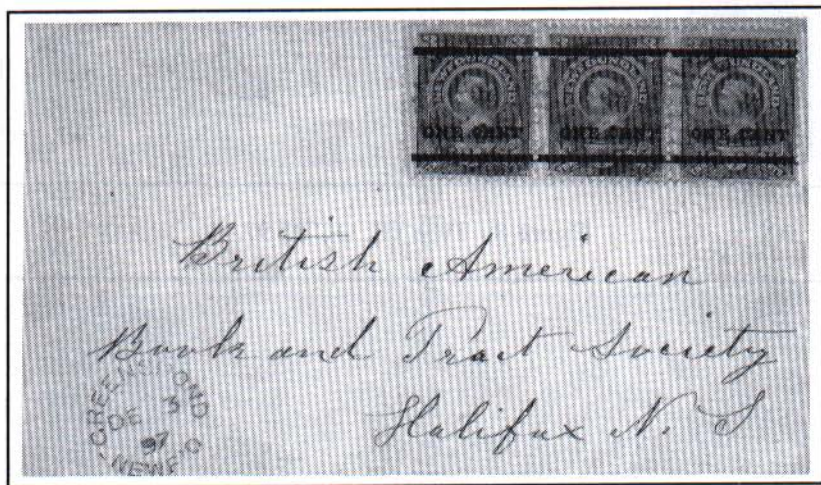
The provisionals remained in use until early December, when the 1¢ red Victoria of the new Royal Family set finally arrived. Pratt says the issue arrived on Saturday, December 4, 1897 along with the 2¢ orange Prince of Wales (2¢ stocks were rapidly being depleted also). Yet, as Table 2 shows, at least one more cover had the PAID ALL applied that day. Pratt says the new stamps were used on outgoing mail on the *S.S. Portia*. I have not yet seen a cover with the new 1¢ from that date. Figure 9 shows late usage of December 3, 1897 within the provisional period, from Greenspond with a left margin strip of three Type I's.

PART 4: FORGERIES APLENTY

There are a lot of forgeries of the provisionals around, especially Type III. Ed Wener, whose price list, *INDIGO*, often contains articles on Newfoundland forgeries, states that

at least half the copies he's examined are forgeries. Most are used since used copies of the 1890 Victoria are so cheap, compared with used examples of Type III. This differential has existed a long time. I note a 1931 GIBBONS CATALOGUE listing the 3¢ Victoria used at 6 pence, but TYPE III at 8 pounds. Even today, according to my 1991 version (in U.S. funds), a used Victoria is listed at for \$1.25, compared to \$555 for a used III. As early as March of 1898, mint Type III's were being bought by dealers for \$10, or 1000 times face and a significant amount of money, at that time!

Figure 9. Type I, left margin strip of three, DE 3 97.



With care one can plate any of the provisionals. All blocks of 50 were surcharged with the same type setup. Flaws in the red proofs are repeated in the final black versions. Note, for example, the upper right Type I, in the block in Figure 1. The N in ONE has a damaged serif at top left. This is a quick way to verify blocks of the three types, by the way. Although the distance between bars vary on Type I's, they are very close on the Type III's, positioned at 49 & 50 in the setting. Ed Wener, John Walsh (co-author of the NEWFOUNDLAND SPECIALIZED STAMP CATALOGUE) and I have closely measured legitimate Type III's. Measurements should be taken at far left and far right and averaged. These show differences between bars as being between 17.5 mm and 17.6 mm. Another critical measurement is the distance between ONE CENT and the lower bar. This should be between 2.2 and 2.3 mm's. The scarce red proofs measure somewhat more since the thickness of the red bars is less than the black. From one of the red proof sheets on buff (ex-Krippner) I measure the bars at about 18 mm apart and the space under ONE CENT as 2.5 mm.

The instant inflation in value of the Type III's led to instant forgery. The first forgers were arrested in 1898, but finally let go when it was decided that the Post Office was not defrauded by someone turning 3¢ stamps into 1¢ stamps! L.L. Krippner stated that the forgeries were on the brown lilac version of the Victoria. Based upon the various statements made at that time I believe a fair summation is that 100 of the Type III's were forged with the ONE CENT about 4.5 mm above the lower bar, and the bars spaced further apart than in the authentic copies. One of the six forgeries Wener showed in a price list article of several years ago might well be one of these early forgeries. He

measures the bars at 19.1 mm apart and the ONE CENT 4.5 mm above the lower bar.

Many forgeries have been made since the 1898 version, encouraged by the cheap availability of the 3¢ Victoria. Although Pratt states in his comprehensive 1986 article that he has never seen an "authentic forgery", forgeries are quite common. Just this year I have seen photographs in the catalogues from two of the largest British Commonwealth auction houses clearly showing forged Type III's. One block version showed the bars only 15 mm apart and the ONE CENT a mere 1 mm above the lower bar. The second, red trial version, had the bars 17.2 mm apart and the ONE CENT 3 mm above the lower bar. Obviously, caution must be taken before purchasing unauthenticated Type III's.

This completes my survey of the 1897 postal shortage. I would like to provide a caveat at this point. I have only been studying the subject a few years, and truly believe more discoveries will be made — perhaps even an OC 18 97 cover with one of the surcharged Victoria's. While writing this article, for example, and discussing it with the dealer friend who bought the Krippner material mentioned earlier, I found he had the scarce red proof sheet I show in Figure 2 (it now appears three escaped destruction in 1897), and had filed it away not knowing what it was. Its discovery provided him a good sale and a welcome addition to my collection. The irony is that it has been brought back to light only because I decided to write this article.

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