

The Stamps of Canada, Chapter 54

The 1899 “2 Cents” on 3¢ Provisionals

Based on a Mekeel's Weekly Publication by B. W. H. Poole, with images added



2¢ on 3¢ Leaf Provisional single and top margin Plate No. 5 Imprint block of 8 (Sc. 87).



2¢ on 3¢ Numeral Provisional single and top margin Plate No. 4 Imprint block of eight (Sc. 88).

One result of the Imperial Conference on Postal Rates held in London, in addition to the inauguration of Imperial Penny Postage, was to revive the agitation for the reduction of the domestic rate on postage in Canada from 3¢ to 2¢ on letters weighing one ounce or less. Indeed just prior to this Convention a bill in amendment of the Post Office Act had been assented to by Parliament under which it was agreed the reduced rate of postage should prevail, but no immediate steps were taken to enforce the reduction, it being left to the Governor General to name a date when the change should take effect.

The establishment of Imperial Penny Postage, however, brought matters to a head, for it was a ridiculous state of affairs under which a charge of 3¢ had to be levied in carrying a letter from one town to another in Canada while 2¢ would carry a similar letter (if under half an ounce in weight) to any point in the British Isles. Consequently the Governor General named New Year's Day as the date when the reduced rate of domestic postage should come into force as shown by the following "Order in Council":—

"Post Office Department.

"By Proclamation dated the 29th day of December, 1898, in virtue of the Act further to amend the Post Office Act (61 Victoria, Chapter 20) and of an Order in Council in accordance therewith, it was declared that the postage rate payable on all letters originating in and transmitted by post for any distance in Canada for delivery in Canada, should be one uniform rate of two cents per ounce weight, from the 1st January, 1899."

The immediate effect of this change of rates was a vast increase in the demand for 2¢ stamps and a corresponding decrease in the use of the 3¢. Also, to fall in line with Postal Union requirements a change



2¢ on 3¢ Numeral Provisional tied by 31 JY '99 Kingston duplex to cover to Baltimore, the earliest recorded use of this stamp on cover; with a 2 AU receiver on back.

of color was necessary, but this did not take place at once, the postal authorities preferring to follow their usual precedent of using up the old stamps first.

The 3¢, which had been printed in large quantities, moved so slowly that the Post-Office Department decided that the only way the stock could be used up within a reasonable time would be to reduce the stamps to the value of 2¢ by means of a surcharge. This intention, as well as a change in the color of the regular 2¢ stamps, was set forth in a circular issued on July 1st, 1899,

from which we extract the following:—

"Owing to the reduction in the Domestic letter rate of postage, the issue of the 3¢ letter-card, the 3¢ stamped envelope, and the 3¢ postage stamp from the Department has ceased. Any unused 3¢ letter-cards, 3¢ stamped envelopes or 3¢ stamps, still extant, will, however, continue available for postal purposes, or may be exchanged at any Post Office, at their full face value, for postage stamps of other denominations.

"The color of the Domestic-rate postage stamp, as prescribed by the Universal Postal Union, is red, and it is intended to discontinue the issue of the ordinary two-cents purple colored stamps as soon as the present supply on hand is exhausted. This will be about the 20th July, 1899. Thereafter the Department will issue two cents stamps in red, first, however, surcharging down to two cents the unissued remnant of the three cents stamps in red, now in the possession of the Department, and as soon as the supply of such surcharged threes is exhausted, the issue of two cents stamps in red will begin. The surcharged stamps will be issued to Postmasters as 2¢ postage stamps and be recognised as postage stamps of that denomination."

To be Continued

The Stamps of Canada, Chapter 55

The 1899 "2 Cents" on 3¢ Provisionals

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In our previous Chapter, we closed with this excerpts from a circular issued on July 1st, 1899:—

"...The color of the Domestic-rate postage stamp, as prescribed by the Universal Postal Union, is red, and it is intended to discontinue the issue of the ordinary two-cents purple colored stamps as soon as the present supply on hand is exhausted. This will be about the 20th July, 1899."

Picking up from there, the official estimate of the time the then existing stock of 2¢ purple stamps would last was not far wrong for on July 20th the first of the surcharged labels were issued.



2¢ on 3¢ Maple Leaf Provisional (Sc. 87)

The surcharge follows a somewhat peculiar arrangement the numeral "2" and "S" of CENTS being larger than the rest of the inscription, which is flat at the bottom and concave at the top. This distinctive type is said to have been adopted to make counterfeiting difficult, though it is hardly likely anyone would have reduced a 3¢ stamp to the value of 2¢ with the idea of defrauding the Government!

Evidently the inscription was specially engraved and from it a plate was constructed so that a sheet of one hundred stamps could be overprinted at one operation. Some little variation will be found in the thickness of the type of the surcharge, though whether this is due to the use of more than one plate or simply to overinking or wear is a doubtful matter. The normal position of the surcharge is horizontally across the bottom of the stamps but owing to poor register it is sometimes found much out of position, and specimens with the overprint across the centre of the labels have been recorded.

The surcharge was, at first, applied only to the 3¢ stamps of the numeral type but it



2¢ on 3¢ Maple Leaf Provisional single with surcharge inverted (Sc. 88 variety)

was soon decided to also use up the unissued remainders of the 3¢ "maple-leaf" design by surcharging them in the same manner. These stamps were first issued on



2¢ on 3¢ Maple Leaf Provisional (Sc. 88)

August 8th. Both varieties are known with inverted surcharge. How many of each of these three cent stamps were surcharged is not known for certain as the official figures dealing with the issue of stamps makes no distinction between the two varieties. It is stated that altogether 4,120,000 were surcharged and as the varieties are equally plentiful it is only reasonable to suppose that approximately equal numbers of both types were used up.

Reference List.

- Stamps of 1897 and 1898 surcharged "2 CENTS" in black.
- 71. 2¢ on 3¢ carmine "Maple Leaf", Scott's No. 87
- 72. 2¢ on 3¢ carmine "Numeral", Scott's No. 88.

2¢ on 3¢ Leaf Provisional tied by 2 OC '99 Quebec c.d.s. to "CUSTOMS CANADA" envelope to Lennoxville



Pair and single of 2¢ on 3¢ Leaf Provisionals (Sc. 87) with two 1/2¢ and 1¢ Leaf issues plus 1¢, 2¢ carmine, 6¢ and 8¢ Numerals (Sc. 66(2), 67, 75, 77, 80, 82 and 88) mostly tied by rollers to registered advertising cover, 25¢ in postage to pay quadruple the 5¢ UPU rate plus 5¢ registration, from Montreal 27 NO '99 to France,



with Paris 9 DE transit and next day Roanne receiver on back. Left, 2¢ on 3¢ Leaf Provisional (Sc. 87) with 1/2¢ Leaf and Numeral, and 5¢ Numeral on domestic Letter Card (Sc.

66, 74, 79, and UL9), 10¢ total, for Uprated and Registered delivery to Switzerland, all tied by Berlin 21 AP '00 c.d.s. cancels, with London 2 MY oval registered handstamp on front, Bern 3.V.00 receiver on back. Right, two 2¢ on 3¢ Leaf Provisionals (Sc. 87) with 5¢ Leaf, 1¢ Jubilee, and six 1/2¢ Numerals, paying the quadruple registered 13¢ rate and all tied by 12 JU '00 c.d.s.



duplexes and oval Rs on cover to Bonavista, Newfoundland.

To be Continued

The Stamps of Canada, Chapter 56

The Bi-sected Provisionals

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The somewhat sudden reduction of the domestic postal rate from 3¢ to 2¢ on single letters led to the production of a few provisional stamps of peculiar character at Port Hood, N.S., the postmaster of that town dividing some of his 3¢ stamps into two unequal portions and using the smaller parts as 1¢ and the larger ones as 2¢. In the *Monthly Journal* for January, 1899, they are referred to as follows:—

In some offices 1¢ and 2¢ stamps ran short, and their places were supplied by one-third and two-thirds portions of 3¢ stamps divided vertically. In some places our correspondent says, these divided stamps were employed without further alteration, but in others we regret to hear that they were surcharged with a figure "2" in purple, upon the figure "3" of the larger portion or the word "one" in green, upon the smaller part; or, to further complicate matters, when thirds of two adjoining stamps were used for 2¢ each part was impressed with a figure "2." Our informant's letter is franked in part by 2/3 of a 3¢ stamp surcharged "2" so we fear that this horrible tale is founded on fact.

In the same journal for March further reference is made to these provisionals, viz.:—

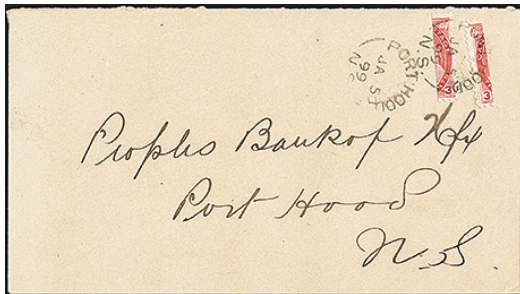
The surcharged fractions appear to have been used only at Port Hood, N.S., where the Postmaster apparently did not consider it safe to use divided stamps without some distinguishing mark. We have seen other copies since, and find that a figure "1" was struck upon the smaller portion; not the word "one" as previously stated.

Again in the April number of the same paper these split stamps are referred to:—

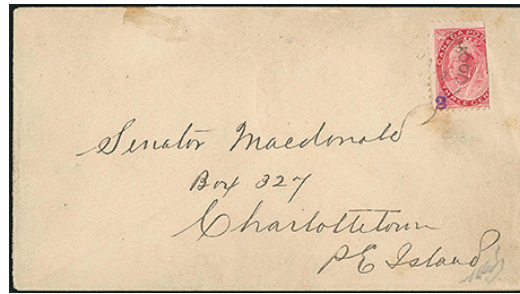
In reference to the cut and surcharged 3¢ stamps, a correspondent sends us the following extract from a letter from the postmaster of Port Hood:—"When the change in Canadian postage was made—of which we got notice by wire—I had only a very few two cent stamps in stock, so that before I got my supply from Ottawa I ran completely out of them, and, to keep my account straight, I was compelled to cut threes. This was for one day only, and not over 300 stamps were cut. I would say about 200 '2' and 100 '1' were used. About 100 '2' and probably nearly as many '1' were marked with the figures '2' and '1' as you describe, and were placed on letters for delivery in towns throughout the Dominion. Those were the only provisional stamps used by this office."

Once more, in June, the *Monthly Journal* refers to the philatelically notorious Port Hood office:—

A correspondent tells us that the surcharged provisionals were not the first instances of the use of the scissors at Port Hood, an envelope emanating from that office and bearing the half of the 2¢ stamp, divid-



Port Hood cover with two one-thirds of 3¢ splits, Sc. 88B



Port Hood cover with two-thirds of a 3¢ and "2" surcharge.



Cover piece with two one-thirds of 3¢ splits, in this case with "1" surcharge on each

ed diagonally, having been found with the date July 27th, 1898. We do not know what the regulations are in Canada on the subject of receiving postage in cash, but we should suppose

that if a postmaster runs out of 1¢ stamps, receives postage on certain letters, in cash, and then, to save an entry in his accounts, cuts 2¢ stamps in half and affixes the halves to the letters, it would not be considered a very heinous offence, and it would account for curiosities of this kind occasionally turning up.

Port Hood does not seem to have been the only office in which the scissors were used. The following letter from the *Montreal Philatelist* shows that stamps were bi-sected at at least one other office. In this instance the postmaster divided 5¢ stamps as well as the 3¢. Apparently, he did not apply any surcharge to the fractions:—
Cross Road, Country Harbor,
April 17th, 1900.

Dear Sir,—Your enquiry re stamps to hand. At the time you mention the 2¢ postage was given us so suddenly that I was about out and all my neighbour P.M. was also out and as I could only charge the public 2¢ I could not afford to put on a 3¢ stamp so cut 3¢ and 5¢ to about even the thing up and sent them along. Three or four days' letters were mailed in this way, but I do not know where they went to.

Yours very truly,
E.S. Sweet, Postmaster.

The same journal in referring to the Port Hood provisionals makes some interesting comments which are worth reproduction, viz.:—

This postmaster must be a relic of the anti-confederation regime, when such mutilations were allowed, as even an entire absence of the required values would not warrant, under present regulations, this antiquated process. In such cases the postmaster should forward the money to the office on which his mail is forwarded with a request to affix the necessary stamps; he can handstamp or write the amount paid on each letter if desired, but that is not necessary. As these fractional provisionals of the Port Hood P.O. were never issued to the public, but were affixed by the postmaster and the amount paid stamped on them, they are no more deserving of collection as postage stamps than the hand stamp or pen mark on an envelope would be if no stamp or portion of a stamp had been affixed. If it is asked "Why cut up and affix the stamps then?" the answer is the postmaster knew no better and wanted to make his cash account correspond with the total of stamps sold and on hand. He tried to simplify his book-keeping—nothing more—but went about it in an antiquated and unlawful way.

To Be Continued

The Stamps of Canada, Chapter 57

The Bi-sected Provisionals

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While genuine copies of these splits on original covers are interesting curiosities their philatelic value is not of the greatest importance, for they were, seemingly, never sold to the public but simply affixed by the postmaster after he had received payment in cash, to simplify his accounts. They were certainly not authorised and if they had been detected at the larger offices they would not have passed as valid for postage.

In concluding our notes with regard to these cut stamps we reproduce a letter from the Post Office Department in reply to a collector who had made enquiry about the validity of the splits: P.O. Dept., Ottawa, March 30th, 1904.

In reply to your letter of the 24th March, re stamps '1' in blue, on 1/3 of 3, and '2' in violet on 2/3 of 3 cents, I beg to say that the Superintendent of the Stamp Branch assures me that no such stamps were ever issued or recognised



The Port Hood Provisional 2¢ on 2/3 of 3¢ carmine (Scott 88C), tied on piece by Port Hood circular date stamp, January 4, 1899

by this Department, and if affixed to letters would be treated as ordinary mutilated stamps of no value. It appears that the Postmaster of Port Hood, N.S., at the time of the change of rate found himself short of 2 cents stamps, and, acting on the advice of some stamp fiend apparently, cut up a sheet or so of stamps to make twos and ones. He nearly lost his job over it, but the Department never got hold of any of the mutilated stamps. Anybody could make similar stamps by cutting up and marking old threes. Hoping this may be satisfactory to you,

Yours, etc.,
W. H. Harrington.

Reference List.

The 3¢ stamp of 1898 divided vertically and each portion surcharged with a new value.

73. 1(¢) in blue on one-third of 3¢ carmine, Scott's No. 85B.
74. 2(¢) in violet on two-thirds of 3¢ carmine. Scott's No. 85C.