

CANADA IMPERIAL PENNY POST 1898

SYNOPSIS

In the latter years of the 19th century Queen Victoria's British Empire had expanded to include almost one third of the world's inhabited surface. This was achieved by creating a far flung empire of colonies that stretched around the globe. Many persons had migrated to these far flung regions, spreading family and friends far from each other, yet still anxious to "stay in touch". Unfortunately the cost of sending mail to the various areas, had become very expensive, when one considers that it cost almost one day's pay to send a letter via the boats and other travel means essential to deliver the assorted items to their destination.

Many of the various political leaders of the day realized that communication was essential to preserve the empire, and a great deal of lobbying took place within Great Britain, and abroad to initiate a "Penny Post" as between colonies of the British Empire. After years of pressure and negotiation, the Penny Post came about, and was introduced by 30 of the 50 plus British colonies, to become effective Xmas day 1898.

To commemorate this achievement, Canada issued a special stamp, during December 1898, whose design depicted a map of the world, portrayed in Mercator projection. The main design of the stamp was the world, illustrated in black on white, with Great Britain and the British colonies depicted in Red, and the oceans of the world in shades of blue and blue/green.

The stamp was very unique for that time, 1898, since aside from the Canadian Beaver stamp, it was to be the first stamp issued within the British Empire which did not have in its design a cameo of either Queen Victoria or Prince Albert. It was also unique from the standpoint of production, as it required three separate runs through the printing presses to produce the three colours featured on the stamp, black, red and shades of blue.

The original order for the stamp as requested by the Postmaster General of Canada, Sir William Mulock, required that 50% of the 20 million stamps to be printed, were to have Blue oceans, and the other 50% Green oceans. This led to a variety shades of the blue colours being produced. The blue shades actually turned out to be lavender and/or light blue, and the green shades developed into deeper blue and blue/green.

The stamp was produced over a twelve month period from December 1898 until December 1899, and its period of use extended from December 7, 1898 until early 1900 with some carry over until later. Subsequent to the actual printing of the stamp, a further phenomenon occurred with the "blue" and/or "green" shades used in the oceans. The stamps which were affected appear to have gone through a metamorphosis and some of the oceans have become "muddy" and or assumed golden hues. Examples of this transformation, and some philosophy as to why this occurred are within this exhibit.

The exhibit also illustrates the design and production of the stamp, as well as the some of the anomalies that occurred from the four black plates and two red plates used in producing the stamp. The peak period of the stamps usage was December 1898 and the calendar year of 1899, although there was minimal usage subsequent to it ceasing to be printed. Included within the exhibit are samples of the various postmarks of the day as well as some of the covers used.

SOME RARE ITEMS in the EXHIBIT:

The stamp was officially issued for public use on Xmas day, (December 25th , 1898), commemorating the inauguration of the Penny Post, and for that reason, has also been referred to as Canada's Xmas Map Stamp. On that same date F.R. Latchford forwarded a letter to the Postmasters of the 38 British Colonies, and asked for the return of his envelope. Eleven of these letters were returned and are referred to as the Latchford Letters, which are rare items. There are only five recorded Map Stamp bisects which also categorizes these as very rare, the other most rare item in this exhibit is the only known Imperforate full sheet from the 5th plate of the 4 known plates used to produce this stamp.

The following outlines the main features of this exhibit

- Introduction page showing the three printing stages of the Map Stamp
- The first letter mailed from Ottawa using the first stamp produced, sent to the British Postmaster General by Sir William Mulock, Canada's Postmaster General
- Letter sent to J. Henniker Heaton, the British M.P., and lobbyist for the Ocean One Penny Post
- The British lobbying envelopes for Penny Post lobbying and Preproduction Material
- Proofs & Die Proofs (including full sheets)
- Production Material
- Examples of the Pre One Penny (Two Cent) postal Rates and Post Two Cent Rates & nique Cancels & Pre-cancels
- Patriotic & Advertising Covers
- Muddy Water Studies
- Bisects of the Map Stamp
- Covers retrieved from ocean Depths

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