

NOVA SCOTIA STAMPS AND ITS PROVISIONALS.

(BY HENRY HECHLER.)

Since writing the article on the above subject that appeared in No. 4 of Vol. I of this journal we have made the fullest efforts by correspondence, and all other available means to obtain precise information and to reach the bottom facts in the matter. The following is the result:—

Previous to the confederation of the British North American Provinces the various local post offices throughout Nova Scotia, received their supply of stamps from the G. P. O. in Halifax. In 1861 a post master in one of these local offices, having run out of their current issue of stamps, and having on hand a small quantity of the obsolete issue of 1850 conceived and carried out the idea of surcharging the latter so as to make them available for current use. Thus he surcharged the 3d stamps with "5 cents" (the then regular rate) the figure just on the crown and the word below it. Some of these surcharges were in black and others in red ink. The 6d was similarly surcharged also, but the specimens that we have seen are only of those in black, though we are assured that red ink was also employed.

As these provisionals were only issued from one office and for a very short time they are, naturally, among rarest stamps known to the philatelic fraternity. With much difficulty, almost in fact by accident, I secured a few specimens. They were in the possession of an old gentleman who, though not a philatelist, was struck at the time by their oddity and preserved them.

Learning of my enquiries he offered them to me, being evidently impressed with the idea that he had something of great value to dispose of. Most of them were, however, so badly mutilated as to be almost worthless.

At our first interview I made him so liberal an offer that his estimate of their value rose immensely, and it required considerable negotiations before we could reach a mutually satisfactory basis on which the stamps in question changed hands.

During twenty-four years experience in the science of philately I have inspected many catalogues. I find them all to be in error with regard to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick stamps, in that that they give 1857 as the first date of issue, whereas I have in my possession several entire letters bearing stamps, the postal obliterations on which prove them to have been in use long before that year. For instance, one shows that it was forwarded from Miramichi, N. B., Sept. 20th, 1851, and was received in Halifax two days later. The postal marks on this letter are peculiarly plain. I have several others of 1852, '53, '54, etc. This establishes beyond question the fact that stamps were in use in these provinces at least six, (and I incline to think seven) years prior to the date credited by dealers' catalogues.

In order to thoroughly post my readers as to Nova Scotia stamps I here submit the following chronological and descriptive catalogue of all regular and provisional stamps that have ever been used in this peninsula. This, taken with the article published in a previous number, referred to above, will give our readers complete and correct information on the subject.

In 1850 the first Act authorising the issuance of postage stamps in Nova Scotia was passed by the Provincial Legislature. This Act was in pursuance of a permissive Act of the Imperial Parliament previously passed, and the stamps thus ordered were to comply in their denominations with the currency of the time.

The issue of this year composed a set of four all printed on blue tinted paper and diamond-shaped. The set consisted of a 1d stamp, printed in red-brown color, which bore a bust portrait of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and a 3d, printed in blue, a 6d in green and a 1s in violet. The latter three each bore a crown in the centre in an octagonal space and having on the outer sides respectively the inscriptions "Nova Scotia," "Postage," and the value in words. In each corner also is the value in figures. Just inside this outer band at each corner is a star partially surrounded by a semi-ellipse, each bearing a national emblem, a rose, a thistle, a shamrock and a mayflower, representing the three divisions of the United Kingdom and Nova Scotia. This design was retained till 1860.

In 1858, however, the 3d and 6d stamps were produced on white paper instead of blue as before.

During the ten years that these stamps were in use—between 1850 and 1860—the mail service was dependant on coaches, sailing vessels and other slow and uncertain means of conveyance. In consequence some country offices, that were not largely supplied with stamps from the head office at the capital, were driven at times to adopt the device of halving and even quartering them to meet the demands of persons corresponding by mail. The following cuttings of stamps are known to have been thus used:—

The 1s has been three-quartered, halved and quartered to take the place respectively of 9d, 6d and 3d. The 6d has been halved diagonally to supply the lack of 3d stamps. This makes a direct variety of four provisionals. Of course the variations could be much extended by taking each of the different portions of a so divided stamp as a separate stamp, but this is not necessary as one instance of each is quite sufficient to be shown in a collection. However it is worthy of any collector's notice that the genuineness of more of these provisionals cannot be guaranteed unless enough of the wrapper is retained to show the entire post office obliteration.

In 1860, Nova Scotia having adopted a decimal currency, it became necessary to order a new series to comply therewith. Accordingly in that year stamps of six different values were issued. The first three bore the Queen's head in profile. The latter half of the series had her bust in full-face and wearing a diadem. These stamps were in shape an oblong-rectangle. At the top was the inscription "Nova Scotia" and at the bottom the value. The respective values and colors of this series were, 1c, black, 2c, mauve, 5c, blue (of this there were two varieties; one was on white paper and the other on blue-tinted), 8½c, green, 10c, vermilion and 12½c, black.

We have seen halvings of the 10c stamps of this series made both diagonally and perpendicularly. This makes a possible total of this series of eleven. Added to other provisionals mentioned the entire list of Nova Scotia stamps comprises twenty-nine all told.