

Large Queen Issue of Canada
by Tom Meyerhof
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Introduction

On 1 July 1867 the colonies of the Province of Canada, comprising Canada East (Quebec) and Canada West (Ontario), New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia united under the British North America Act to form the Dominion of Canada. It was not until 1 April 1868, however, that the Post Office Act regulating postal services in the new Dominion came into force. Prior to that date, postal services continued in accordance with the colonial legislation that had existed before Confederation. A subsequent order laid out the principal rates of postage and the relevant postage stamp denominations, “all bearing as a device, the effigy of Her Majesty”. Until October 1875 the payment of postage with stamps was optional and letters could be mailed either paid or unpaid.

On 1 April 1868, the first set of Dominion of Canada stamps with the vignette of “Victoria’s Head to Right” was issued to postmasters. These stamps are commonly known as the Large Queens, Large Heads or Large Cents to distinguish them from the subsequently issued smaller-sized stamps, the Small Queens, Small Heads, or Small Cents which gradually replaced the Large Queens starting in 1870. Initially seven denominations were issued to correspond to the principal postage rates described in the legislation; namely ½¢, 1¢, 2¢, 3¢, 6¢, 12½¢, and 15¢. A further denomination, 5¢, was issued in 1875 as a result of the reduction in the letter rate to the UK.

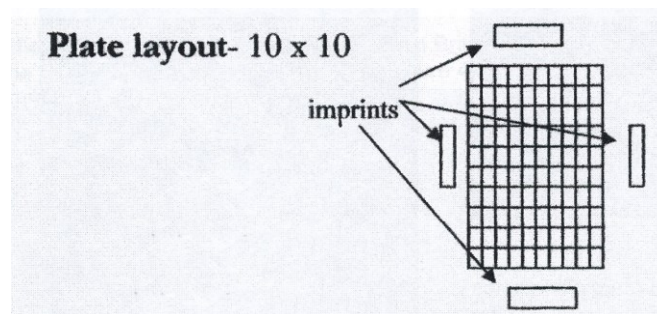
Denomination	Principal Uses
Half Cent	periodicals weighing less than 1 oz. in Canada, to Newfoundland or the US
One Cent	drop letters, pamphlets and other printed matter per oz. in Canada and to the US, periodicals per 4 oz. in Canada, to Newfoundland or the US
Two Cents	domestic registration, transient newspapers, circulars to the UK, soldier’s letters
Three Cents	domestic letter rate per ½ oz. if prepaid
Five Cents	reduced single letter rate to the UK after 1 Oct 1875
Six Cents	letter rate to the US per ½ oz. if prepaid, letter rate to UK per ½ oz. 1 Jan 1870 to 30 Sep 1875
Twelve and a Half Cents	letter rate to Newfoundland and to the UK per ½ oz. via Canadian Packet 1 Apr 1868 to 31 Dec 1869, domestic parcel post per 8 oz.
Fifteen Cents	original letter rate per ½ oz. to the UK via New York

All the Large Queen stamps use a similar overall design, differing only in the ornamentation surrounding the portrait of Queen Victoria. The design consists of a circular medallion bearing a diademed profile portrait of the Queen facing right, surrounded by the words ‘CANADA POSTAGE’ above and text for the value below, with numeral values at the lower corners and sometimes also repeated at the top. Acanthus foliations fill in the remainder of the design leading to irregular borders. The printed part of the stamps measures about 20 mm x 24 mm, except for the ½¢ value which is smaller at 17 mm x 21 mm. The portrait was engraved by Alfred Jones from a similar work by the famous British engraver Charles Henry Jeens, the lettering and frame were engraved by Henry Earle Sr., and the ornamental work is thought to be by W.C. Smillie, President of The British American Bank Note Co. of Montreal and Ottawa

(BABN). The stamps were produced by the BABN which had been founded in 1866 by former American Bank Note Co. employees.

Production

Each Large Queen denomination was line engraved in reverse on a steel die. This was an exacting hand process in which the engraver carefully cut a mirror image of the original drawing for the stamp. Proof prints were then taken to check the quality of the engraved image. After approval, the die was hardened and the image impressed using a rocking motion under considerable pressure onto a soft steel cylinder known as a transfer roll. The transfer roll in turn was hardened and used to create the printing plate, again by making several passes under pressure for each of the 100 subject impressions arranged in a 10 by 10 layout on the printing plate. To assist the transfer press operator to accurately locate the transfer roll for each plate subject, a locating pin known as a side-point was fixed to the transfer roll. The side-point was positioned by the operator in a series of 100 geometrically aligned holes which had been previously punched into the printing plate prior to rocking in each plate subject. The manufacturer's imprint (Brinish American Bank Note Co, Montreal and Ottawa) was then entered on all four sheet margins, reading normally on the top and bottom, up on the left side and down on the right side. Denomination values, also known as counters, were entered on the top sheet margin in the upper left for all values except the 2¢ and 15¢ sheets. The imprints required the preparation of separate dies and transfer rolls. One plate was prepared for each value except for the 3¢ and 6¢ value for which two plates were prepared. The printing as normal for this period was done by the wet process on dampened sheets of paper which were subsequently allowed to dry before the gum was manually applied and the sheets perforated.



Papers, Perforations, Gums and Quantities

The Large Queens were printed by the recently established BABN on a wide variety of papers as they experimented and arranged for supplies of printing paper. The period 1868 to 1872 shows the most variability, after which a standard stout wove paper was extensively used. Specialists in this issue classify the papers used into 10 types including watermarked and laid papers, which are briefly described at the end of this document. A rare stitch watermark can also be found on most values, caused by the stitched joins in the canvass blanket used in the paper-making process. It is generally believed that most paper stock was supplied by two companies from the UK, namely Andrew Whyte and Sons of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and Alexander Pirie and Sons of Stoneywood and Culter Scotland.

All stamp values were perforated nominally as 12 x 12, with two values, namely the ½¢ and 15¢, also perforated as 11½ x 12, while the 5¢ can be found perforated in both variations as well as 11¾ x 12.

The gum used for the Large Queen issue varied from a thin, smooth white to a slightly yellowish gum to a heavier brownish gum, found in streaky and smooth variations. For mint stamps the appearance of the gum can help to date the printing. On printings from 1868 to mid 1873 the gum was thin, smooth and white. This was followed by streaky brown gum for printings to 1878 with a hand-brushed appearance. From 1878 to 1888 the gum was very smooth, shiny and yellowish. The gum on the last printings from 1888 to 1893 was thick, smooth and brownish.

The individual stamp denominations were issued to postmasters in various quantities and over different time periods. As stocks of the Large Queen denominations were depleted, most of the values were phased out in favour of the subsequent Small Queen issue which had been planned since 1869. The Small Queen issue allowed BABN to print the same number of stamps more quickly using less paper and at a lower cost, as smaller engraved plates and printing presses were required. The public also preferred the smaller-sized stamps which retained the same popular design and colours. This helped postal workers and the public ensure mailed items were properly franked. Only the 15¢ Large Queen was not replaced and remained on sale at post offices for over 30 years. Another 15¢ value did not appear until 1897 when the Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee commemorative issue included this denomination.

Denomination	Quantity Issued	Issue Period	Papers
Half Cent	6,700,000	Apr 1868 – Jul 1882	2, 3, 6, 8, 10
One Cent, red brown	4,600,000	Apr 1868 – ~ Dec 1868	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
One Cent, yellow orange	4,900,000	~ Jan 1869 – Mar 1870	8, 9, 10
Two Cents	10,500,000	Apr 1868 – Feb 1872	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10
Three Cents	21,500,000	Apr 1868 – Jan 1870	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10
Five Cents	650,000	Oct 1875 – Feb 1876	3, 10
Six Cents	9,300,000	Apr 1868 – Jan 1872	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Twelve and a Half Cents	1,900,000	Apr 1868 – ~ Jun 1888	2, 3, 6, 7, 8*, 10
Fifteen Cents	2,400,000	Feb 1868 – ~ Jun 1900	2, 3, 6, 10

* not seen by the Duckworths, but listed in Unitrade

The individual denominations will now be briefly considered.

Half Cent

The half cent value occurs on various papers as noted above. Their order of appearance was likely paper 2 for the first shipment in April 1868, followed by mostly paper 3 in the July 1868 shipment, and largely paper 10 beginning with the July 1871 shipment. Papers 6 and 8 are rare. The first issued stamps were a grey black shade, followed by intense black and later returning to a grey black shade. Several varieties are catalogued. These include a progressive plate flaw in the form of a spur found on many positions at the lower left spandrel ornament, caused by a small sliver of metal from the transfer roll which slowly broke off as the plate was laid down. Another progressive flaw likely of a similar origin occurs as one or more small diagonal lines in the top frame line above the 'P' of 'POSTAGE'. In addition, a flaw in the form of a lack of shading lines is found in the bun of hair (chignon) behind the Queen's neck on several plate

positions, likely caused by insufficient engraving depth. Other re-entries and plate flaws also exist.

One Cent

Originally printed in a red brown shade when issued in April 1868, the colour of the 1¢ denomination was changed to yellow orange in early 1869 to avoid confusion with the similarly coloured 3¢ value, especially under the poor artificial light of the era including oil lamps, candles and gas light. The two major colours are assigned separate Scott/Unitrade numbers. The shades of the early printings range from red brown to orange brown. The first shipment in April 1868 was printed on papers 1 and 3, the second shipment in July 1868 on papers 3, 4 and 6, and subsequent shipments were mainly on paper 8. Deliveries between August 1868 and end January 1869 also included small quantities printed on papers 5 (laid paper), 7, 8 and 9. The yellow orange shade was primarily issued on paper 10 with very limited quantities on papers 8 and 9. The shades range from deep orange on the first printing to yellow for the last printing. There are no known plate varieties for this denomination.

Two Cent

The 2¢ stamp was printed in various shades of green, ranging from deep green initially to yellow green in the last delivery. The first printing was on paper 1 in April 1868, followed by paper 3 in early summer 1868, papers 6 and 8 starting in fall 1868, and paper 10 from mid 1870 onwards. Minor quantities were also issued on papers 4 and 7. There are also 3 copies known on the extremely rare laid paper (paper 5), all with Hamilton ON cancels. Two copies were expertized in 1935 and the last copy with a March 1870 cancel was discovered and expertized in 2013. A major re-entry occurs in plate position 7 showing doubling in some letters of 'CANADA POSTAGE'. Other plate varieties include extraneous guidelines, guide dots and scratches, including the catalogued 'needle nose' plate crack. Bisected copies also exist, as Maritime postmasters occasionally accepted bisected 2¢ stamps on covers to pay the local drop letter rate, or combined with another 2¢ stamp to pay the domestic letter rate.

Three Cent

This value like the 1¢ value was only issued for a short period from April 1868 until it was superseded by the 3¢ Small Queen in January 1870. It first appeared in an orange red shade, followed shortly by redder shades and from early 1869 in brown red shades until its replacement by the Small Queen. The first 3¢ stamps were printed mainly on paper 3 with smaller quantities on papers 1 and 2, the second delivery also included a small quantity on paper 4. Small quantities printed on laid paper (paper 5) were included in these first deliveries invoiced in April and July 1868. In the deliveries between August 1868 and end January 1869, paper 6 was the main component with small quantities printed on papers 3 and 8. The next delivery comprised papers 6 and 10 and later deliveries were essentially all on paper 10. A number of varieties can be found including the catalogued 'goatee' and 'shaving nick' flaws, as well as with extra guide dots, plate cracks, scratches and several re-entries.

Five Cent

With the reduction in postal rates from Canada to the UK, a 5¢ value was hastily issued in October 1875 as a temporary measure pending the availability of a 5¢ Small Queen in February 1876, likely using a Large Queen die engraved in 1867, but never used. The value was printed in olive green shades. Three perforation groups exist, the most common being 11¾ x 12 comprising about 61% of the production, 11½ x 12 comprising about 33%, and the rarer 12 x 12 variant comprising about 6%. The later likely represents Ottawa production, with the majority of the stamps having been printed in Montreal. No varieties have been reported.

Six Cent

This value was printed using two plates in various shades of brown. The first deliveries invoiced in April 1868 are found on papers 2 and 3, the second and further shipments to end January 1869 are on papers 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9, while the August to October 1869 deliveries are found on papers 6, 7, 8 and 10. Subsequent shipments were almost entirely on paper 10 in a yellow brown shade. Plate 1, used for about 60% of the stamp production, was re-entered early in its life and in more positions than any other Large Queen plate. As a result 23 re-entries are documented by Duckworths in addition to four plate flaws, while 12 flaws are described for Plate 2. Two are the major re-entries listed in the Unitrade catalogue. Bisected 6¢ stamps on covers used to pay the domestic 3¢ letter rate are known from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia where the practice was still informally condoned by some postmasters.

Twelve-and-One-Half Cent

The 12½¢ value was originally intended for the single letter rate to the UK and subsequently served as a parcel post rate after January 1870 as it no longer had a specific application given the intervening rate reduction. It was issued in shades of blue until 1888 and was never replaced by an equivalent value Small Queen stamp. Almost all the production was perforated 12 all around although an extremely rare 11½ x 12 perforation variety has also been found. The first delivery invoiced in April 1868 is found on papers 2 and 3, the second delivery invoiced in July 1868 involved papers 2 and 3 with a smaller quantity on paper 6, while the third delivery invoiced in April 1869 included papers 7 and 10 in addition to the previous papers. The fourth delivery in December 1869 is found mainly on paper 10 with small quantities on paper 6. While the plate was never re-entered, a few flaws have been found and catalogued, including the lower left and lower right missing frame line varieties caused by poor transfer roll impressions, the balloon flaw in the lower left margin thought to be the result of minor plate damage, as well as other minor flaws in the form of dots and scratches.

Fifteen Cent

The 15¢ denomination was issued in a wide range of shades with two different perforations on several distinct papers including two with different watermarks, one unique to this denomination. These variations are expected given its availability at post offices for over 30 years. It was also the first stamp to be sold precancelled by the post office starting in 1889 for bulk mailings, and produced with perforated initials by private companies starting in 1887 to discourage

postage stamp theft by their employees. As a complex stamp issue, it has been extensively studied and written about by a number of prominent philatelists. From February 1868 to June 1869, the stamps were printed in Ottawa with perforation 12 all around on papers 2, 3 6 and 10 in grey violet to purple shades. Subsequent printings from late 1874 to late 1887 occurred in Montreal. Initially from 1875 to 1879 the sheets were perforated 11½ x 12 in brownish to greenish grey shades and included both the Bothwell and the very rare Pirie watermark varieties. From 1879 to 1887 the Montreal printings were perforated 12 all around in mostly slate grey to slate blue shades. Printing operations returned to Ottawa again from 1888 to 1893 where the stamps were perforated 12 all around and issued in various slate violet shades. One short-lived re-entry and several catalogued as well as uncatalogued plate flaws are known.

Collecting the Large Queen Issue

The Large Queen issue is complex. Collecting the issue and correctly assigning an individual stamp to its correct printing involves a combination of shade, paper, perforation, gum (if mint) and the sharpness of the impression. Frequently the first step in specializing in this issue when going beyond collecting one of each value, is to more fully evaluate the shades or the papers used. Most values can be divided into three or four main shades, while the 15¢ has sixteen shades shown in a specialized colour guide. As for the papers, attempting to collect each value on each of its known papers is extremely difficult even for a Large Queen expert, as some distinctions are subtle, paper thicknesses are variable for each paper, and interpreting such adjectives as crisp, brittle, tough, hard, opaque, transparent, thin, medium, thick, etc. are subjective and can thus cause the collector frustration. It will probably be more satisfying to place the emphasis on acquiring a stamp from the first printing, another from a later printing, as well as stamps from other readily identifiable groups for each denomination.

Another way to expand a Large Queen collection is to focus on re-entries and plate flaws which can be used to classify a stamp as to printing period or plate position. Re-entries result in doubling of parts of the design. They occur as a result of misalignment of the transfer roll as it was impressed on the unhardened steel printing plate more than once to strengthen a weakened area in the design when laying down the plate or after the plate started to show wear from use. In addition, plate flaws in the form of colour dots, lines, missing design features or plate damage can occur, often only for a limited period of the stamp production.

Still another way to expand a basic Large Queen collection is to specialize in the cancellations of the used values. Concurrent with the Large Queen issue, in 1869 a new series of obliterations numbered from 1 through 60 within two concentric circles was placed in use at the 60 largest post offices within Canada. The numbers were assigned in order of postal sale importance. The official 2-ring series replaced the 4-ring series of Canada East and Canada West, as well as the oval grid with numeral obliterations of New Brunswick, at least for those post offices that were assigned and issued the new 2-ring type. There were also numerous unofficial numeral obliterations used during the Large Queen era. These were either locally produced or privately purchased from the manufacturers. In addition to these variations which incorporated both the assigned numeral and the circular format, there were other obliterations, probably locally produced, which incorporated the assigned numeral, but not the circular form. Instead they used barred squares, squared circles and barred ovals as a surround for the numerals. As well as

numeral cancels, creative postmasters carved fancy cancels in the form of initials, crosses, stars, and other geometric designs as their personal cancellers.

In all these collecting areas, new discoveries continue to be made by students of the Large Queen issue even after almost 150 years.

Further Reading

Duckworth, H.E. & H.W., The Large Queen Stamps of Canada and Their Use, 2008

Firth, L.Gerald, Canada: the fifteen cents of 1868, 1963

Morris, Richard M., Color Guide System for Large & Small Queens, Widow Weeds and Registration Stamps of Canada, Pittsboro Philatelics, Norfolk MA, 2000




Reiche, Hans, A Large Queen's Report, 1977


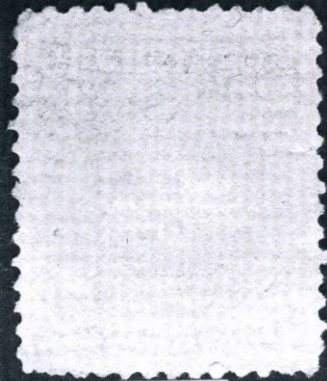


Vincent Graves Greene Foundation Philatelic Research Foundation, Report on the Canada Two Cent Large Queen Stamp on Laid Paper Expertized in 2013, website:
[http://greenefoundation.ca/Report%20on%20Large%20Queen%20Laid%20Paper%20Two%20Cent%20\(July152013\).pdf](http://greenefoundation.ca/Report%20on%20Large%20Queen%20Laid%20Paper%20Two%20Cent%20(July152013).pdf)


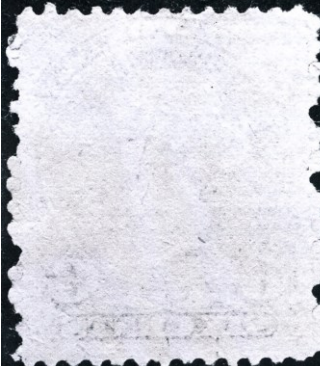

Lundeen, Glen, BNA Proofs, website:
<http://www.bnaproofs.com/can-lq.html>

The Large Queens Issue of Canada, website: (last updated in 2008):
<http://largequeens.com>

Papers Used for the Large Queen Issue

Paper Type (1)	Description
	Thin, hard (crisp), semi-transparent paper with a vague vertical structure resembling pelure paper. The impression of the design is blurred and the design shows through the paper.
	Thin, hard paper, not as transparent as paper 1. The impression of the design is sharper and the structure is vaguely horizontal rather than vertical.
	Ordinary wove paper showing a faint to medium horizontal mesh. The impression of the design is moderately sharp, similar to paper 2, but the paper is less transparent.

 <p>PAPER 4</p>		<p>Stout horizontal wove paper with a somewhat yellowish tone and often with a faint diagonal ribbing. The design is often visible from the back. The impression of the design is sharp.</p>
 <p>PAPER 5</p>		<p>Horizontally laid paper only rarely found on the 1¢, 2¢ and 3¢ stamps, and on no other Large Queen values. The laid lines measure about 13 lines per 2 cm for the 1¢ and 2¢ values, and 14 lines per 2 cm for the 3¢ value.</p>
 <p>PAPER 6</p>		<p>Often called Bothwell paper, 13 to 20 stamps on each sheet show portions of the two line watermark 'E. & G. BOTHWELL CLUTHA MILLS', from an Edinburgh and Glasgow Scotland paper supplier. The paper is medium to thick, has a distinct closely spaced vertical ribbing, and exhibits a light vertical diamond pattern when viewed from the back. Because the paper has a vertical weave the stamps shrank preferentially in the horizontal direction when drying following the printing process. Thus the design is approximately 0.3 mm taller and slightly narrower than that for stamps printed on other papers. A blurred impression and lack of clean perforation separation are other distinctive paper characteristics.</p>
 <p>PAPER 7</p>		<p>A rather coarse paper with an ivory tone and vague vertical structure. It can be distinguished from paper 1 by its coarseness, tone and lack of transparency.</p>

 <p>PAPER 8</p>	Medium thick, soft, chalk white, amorphous paper lacking an apparent grain direction. The paper shows a medium transparency and takes a very sharp impression so that the stamp images exhibit rich shades.
 <p>PAPER 9</p>	Thin paper with a similar white absorbent appearance as paper 8, but with a delicate vertical or horizontal mesh. The design impression is sharp and rich in colour.
 <p>PAPER 10</p>	Stout horizontal wove paper that may exhibit diagonal ribbing similar to paper 4, but is white rather than yellowish and opaque, so that the design can not be seen from the back. It is the most common paper and all values can be found on this paper.
Watermarked Pirie Paper (2)	Very rare and found only on the 15¢ value from the Montreal printing, perforated 11½ x 12. All known dated copies are from 1877. Pirie paper was manufactured from rag stock in Stoneywood and later also at Culter Scotland. The script watermark, reading 'Alexr. Pirie & Sons' running diagonally from lower right to upper left across the sheet, was handmade of bent wire, a method discontinued in 1875.
Notes:	
(1) taken from H.E. & H.W. Duckworth, The Large Queen Stamps of Canada and Their Use, 2008	
(2) taken from L.Gerald Firth, Canada: the fifteen cents of 1868, 1963	