



Book Reports

July – August 2013 Volume 10, Issue 3



STAMPS DELIVER KNOWLEDGE

The “Backward” Admiral

Charles Neyhart

It was more than a few years ago that I recall first seeing a block of oversized Canadian stamps that were printed backward. I didn't pay much attention; I didn't collect Canada. Moreover, their fulsome auction description as “essays” and “proofs” seemed a bit fishy, to say the least. Sometime later though, my lovely wife decided she wanted to collect Canada. Eventually, these backward stamps re-appeared on the radar.

It wasn't until my wife Gloria purchased some of these from a dealer in Victoria that they started to pique my interest. Once I looked at them closely, it was clear they were not what they purported to be. Little did I know at the time that these items had quite a history, a history that might now be settled. But, who knows for sure?

THE SUBJECT

The source for the subject is the 3-cent stamp from Canada's 1911-1925 Admiral series [Figure 1]. That stamp was originally printed in brown ink [1918] and then issued in carmine [1923] to accommodate requisite color changes in the 11-denomination series. The Subject, shown in **Figure 2**, is not only printed in reverse, it is noticeably larger than the stamp upon which it is based. In addition to bright carmine, the Subject is known also in dark blue, dark green and black. The Subject is imperforate all around, but a small number of perforated examples are known. As is typical, the design on the right side margin of a sheet is truncated on its right edge [Figure 3].



Figure 1
The 3-cent Admiral



Figure 2
The “reverse” Admiral



Figure 3
The truncated right sheet margin

EARLY COLLECTOR REACTION

Reaction to the Subject in the Canadian philatelic press was uniformly negative and often hostile. Harry Lussey, commenting in the June 1953 issue of *BNA Topics*, asserted "... it would be charitable to term it a 'reproduction' or perhaps an 'illustration ...' rather than as a 'proof,' as it had been described in a then current auction catalog. He continues:

... but even as a non-collector of proofs it seems to me that for an item to be termed a proof it would have to be printed from the actual die or plate that was used to prepare the stamps. On this basis how in blazes can a reproduction of the 3¢ value IN REVERSE be termed a proof by anyone having any knowledge whatsoever of philately?

Then, in the January 1954 issue of *Maple Leaves*, editor Frederick Tomlinson reproduced a block of six of the Subject and stated "We are in the dark, however, as much as anyone." He then requested "... opinions and guesses from our readers." And respond they did in the April 1954 issue, including by some luminaries in Canadian philately.

Hans Reiche, who later published a well-regarded study on the Admiral series, asserted that the Subject is "... neither an essay, proof, or anything of philatelic value at all." He concludes:

After contacting the American Bank Note Company here [which printed the Admiral stamps, *Author*], and Mr. Marler who is specializing in the Admiral issue as I do, we came to the conclusion that this is only a photo.

L. Seale Holmes, who authored the popular *Holmes Handbook and Catalogue of Canada and British North America* series, wrote:

I note with dismay your page publicity of those "fake" facsimiles of a Canadian Stamp. ... They are merely some photographic reproduction, by some party who is trying to extract money out of gullible collectors. There is nothing official about them, and I hope no collector will fall for them.

G.A. Williamson related a story that the Subject was "... done by the German Government Printer when it was thought there was trouble between the Canadian G.P.O. and their printer, and were submitted as a specimen of what the German Government Printer could do." J.E. Woods, who had purchased five pairs of the Subject, noted he had been provided information from the seller that "...they had been printed in Germany in 1912 and submitted to the Canadian authorities as the result of a tender issue at this time, but not accepted."

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Finally, H.R. Harmer presented a detailed line-by-line comparison between the 3-cent stamp and the Subject, and rejected the Subject as representing an engraved stamp. He suggested it could be "photographically reproduced," hypothesizing that the Subject may have been duplicated from a "... unaccepted essay or something similar that got into unofficial hands."

Things did not improve much for the Subject over the next many years. Ken Pugh's noteworthy *Reference Manual of B.N.A. Fakes, Forgeries & Counterfeits* [1977-81] classifies the Subject as an outright fake.

In a 1972 editorial comment in the May issue of *BNA Topics*, it was suggested the now-called 'reversed essays' were "... samples in order to obtain the printing business from the Canada Post Office." Grudgingly, over time, this became the accepted theory for the printings. Nonetheless, the backward Admirals have largely been regarded as bogus and did not constitute a philatelically legitimate part of a respectable Admiral collection.

THE MYSTERIOUS DR. ECKERLIN

David Sessions, writing in the October 2002 issue of *Maple Leaves*, relied on historical materials supplied by Canadian dealer Gary Lyon to unravel the mystery of "Those Reversed Admiral 'Essays.'" The materials supplied by Lyon were from the auctioned archives of American Bank Note Co. comprising several pieces of written correspondence about the matter at hand.¹ And, yes, it was substantially correct that this was an attempt by a German printing company to promote a proprietary printing process to an established American security printer.

The two major players in this story were: Dr. Eckerlin, a director of Herbst & Illig of Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany and Henry Treadwell, vice-president of engraving at American Bank Note Co. Herbst & Illig was a well-known manufacturer of photographic screens and associated products. [Frank Walsh, of New York City, represented Dr. Eckerlin in New York.]

In 1928, Dr. Eckerlin contacted Treadway for purposes of promoting a proprietary rotary intaglio printing process that was faster and cheaper than steel engraved printing while producing comparatively high quality prints of bank notes and fiscal and postage stamps that would be difficult to counterfeit. Treadway requested samples of Herbst & Illig's work and provided a small selection of ABNC banknote vignette proofs and an experimental sheet of the 3-cent Admiral which had been prepared by surface printing to Eckerlin for reproduction. It was not until the middle of 1930 that Eckerlin sent the reproductions to Treadway.

An accompanying communication from Eckerlin, translated and rewritten by Walsh, was intended to mitigate the generally poor results of the reproductions. The letter also confirmed that the intaglio process used by Herbst & Illig was rotary photogravure in which the source of the printing plates was a photograph of the subject that was then subjected to a multi-step photo-mechanical-chemical conversion process.² In short, the recesses on the copper plates were acid etched instead of being line-engraved on steel as was standard in security printing at the time.

¹ Whereas the Admiral dies were engraved by the American Bank Note Co. headquartered in New York, the stamps were produced by the American Bank Note Co. Ottawa Division. The Ottawa unit became the Canadian Bank Note Co. in 1923. In 1976, Canadian Bank Note Co. became a wholly Canadian-owned company.

² See, L.N. Williams, *Fundamentals of Philately*, rev. ed., APS, 1990. P. 253-98.

The Eckerlin letter was explicit that the Herbst & Illig process first required a line drawing of a subject by a pen and ink artist since it was not otherwise possible to photographically capture and manipulate the variety of lines in an already printed subject. This explains why H.R. Harmer, above, discovered the lack of correspondence when comparing the lines of the 3-cent Admiral with the Subject. Eckerlin had a reversed 3-cent Admiral redrawn by a pen and ink artist from which a photograph was taken and subsequently processed. Eckerlin printed it in an enlarged size to avoid confusion with the real issue. The full Admiral sheets submitted by Eckerlin had 90-subjects, nine columns wide by ten rows deep. [The sheet provided to Eckerlin by ABNC was likely ten by ten.] The 9th column, however, was only partially printed because the printing plate was not wide enough to accommodate the entire ninth column and all of the tenth [see Figure 3].

Treadway, in a letter to D.E. Woodhull, president of ABNC, concluded that Eckerlin's samples did not approach the artistry and security of the ABNC's line-engraved stamps. He also determined through in-house testing that, beyond the increased speed of production, the touted advantages of the Herbst & Illig process, including being difficult to counterfeit, would likely not be realized.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

What to call the Subject has proven problematic. It has been invariably called an "essay" or a "proof." Some auction descriptions go so far as to add a hypothetical catalog designation of 109E or 109P. Some describe the Subject as a "Victory-Kidder trial essay" or a "Victory-Kidder proof" solely because of the recorded existence of a block of six in blue ink that includes the inscription "Victory-Kidder Machine" handwritten in pencil in the margin.³ It is an overly generous attribution. While there was a well-known British printing press manufacturer of that name at that time, there is no real evidence that the reverse Admirals were printed by that firm or by Herbst & Illig on a Victory-Kidder printing press. The source of the handwritten note is unknown.

Calling the Subject an essay is an uneasy stretch and it is definitely not in the nature of a proof. At the time of the events described here, the 3-cent Admiral was no longer an actively produced stamp.⁴ The Subject, in all intents and purposes, is a salesman's sample of a printing process that was independent of the 3-cent stamp. That the Subject is in the form of a reversed and enlarged reproduction of a postage stamp was probably only a matter of working convenience to both parties. This notwithstanding, it would not surprise me if Admiral specialists incorporated copies of the reproduction into their collections as an informative adjunct.

³ This name is usually reported as Victory-Kidden, but it is clearly Victory-Kidder on inspection of a high resolution scan. Moreover, this matches the name of a well-known British firm involved in the manufacture of printing machinery at that time.

⁴ The domestic postage rate dropped from 3-cents to 2-cents in 1926, thus reducing the need for the 3-cent stamp and it appears that the last printing of the 3-cent Admiral was a coil printed in 1926 [over 6 million of these stamps were stored in the CBNC vault for later use, if needed]. Also, at the time of the Eckerlin dealings with ABNC, a new Canadian definitive series including a new 3-cent design, the KGV "Scroll" series, was in production [1928-29].

Prices for the Subject seem to have stabilized, particularly in the Canadian market. Blocks of four are popular as are singles cut close. Subjects offered in the non-philatelic arena, e.g., eBay, are routinely overpriced. Auction descriptions have now incorporated the Eckerlin story as a means to promote the rarity of the Subject, but no one knows how many of these reproductions are actually in the market. The article by Sessions does not refer to a documented record of how many sheets of 90-subjects were submitted by Eckerlin. We do know that at least one sheet in each of the four colors was provided, but Eckerlin, the salesman, may well have submitted multiple sheets of each color for review purposes at various levels within ABNC. These sheets were likely made available as favors by ABNC sometime prior to the 1950s. No information is available about whether additional sheets were released by Herbst & Illig at some point.

Ultimately, ABNC did not invest in Herbst & Illig's rotary intaglio process. Although Treadway and company representatives who later visited the Herbst & Illig facility judged that process to be superior to other non-steel engraved printing methods, there seemed to be little interest in securing the U.S. rights to that process. Photogravure is widely used today in U.S. stamp production. Advances in computer technology have greatly streamlined the process and mitigated earlier security concerns about its use. While the Herbst & Illig process was comparatively rudimentary, its unique expertise with photographic screens, for which it was already well known, greatly improved the quality of the printed product and further development of the method.



[Editor's note: Identifying the reversed Admirals and explaining their source were the questions posed to readers in NPL Research Stumper #13 from the Jan-Feb 2012 issue of *Book Reports*.]

Book Review: The Western Express Companies

Greg Alexander

The Western Express Companies 1850-1890: A Catalog of their Franks and Hand Stamps, 2013, Oscar Melton Thomas, United Postal Stationery Society.

Recently the United Postal Stationery Society was kind enough to provide the NPL with a copy of a new two-volume set, which should be of particular interest to philatelic fans of the Old West. "The Western Express Companies 1850-1890: A Catalog of their Franks and Hand Stamps" is an encyclopedic overview of stage coach and pony express companies that carried mail to and from some of the more remote outposts in the West.

Author Oscar Melton Thomas did exhaustive research to gather background on these companies, some of which were only in business a few years. The time frame begins with the California Gold Rush, as miners and merchants rushed into the state, and were in need of reliable ways to convey communications. (The intercontinental telegraph would not be built for another decade.) Express companies filled the demand.



The first book contains an index of more than 70 pages listing all companies, with the bulk of the books devoted to historical details. Throughout are illustrations of the express office franks and cancels used, some quite rare. Most of these franks are on cover; to save space scans were cropped down in size. A CD comes with the set, showing the entire covers.

More information about "The Western Express Companies" is available on the UPSS website – www.upss.org.

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New on our Shelves

The following resources have been added to our collection:

Barrett, L. G., **U. S. 3c Violet War and Victory**, Booklet #32, Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News, Beverly, MA, 1919

Beachboard, John H., **United States Postal Card Catalog**, United Postal Stationery Society, Redlands, CA, 1995

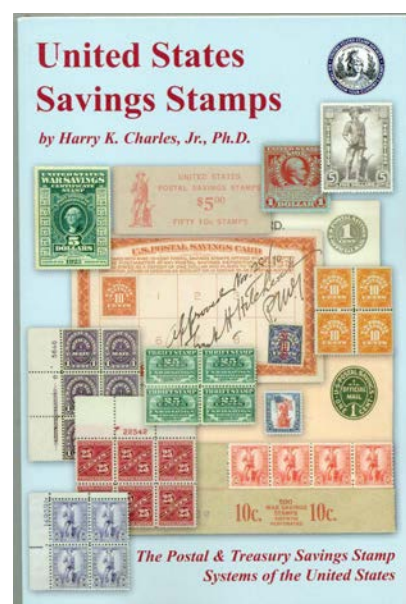
Beedon, F.W., **America the Beautiful**, Chambers Publishing, Kalamazoo, MI, 1945

Brookman, Lester G., **The Bank Note Issues of United States Stamps, 1870-1893**, Triad Publications, Weston, MA, 1941

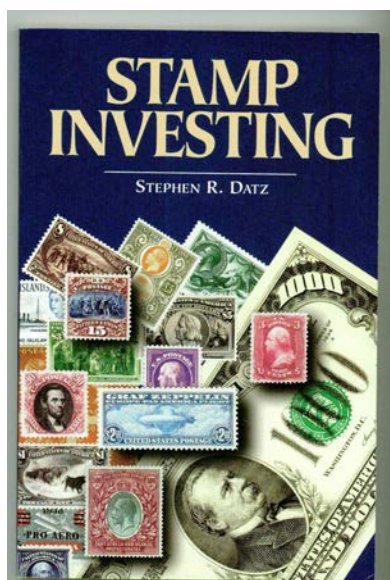
Brookman, Lester G., **Notes on the Grilled Issues of the United States**, Triad Publications, Weston, MA, 1940

Campbell Paterson, **Catalogue of New Zealand Stamps**, Campbell Paterson, Ltd., Auckland, NZ, 1998

Charles, Harry K., **United States Savings Stamps**, United States Stamp Society, Katy, TX, 2012



Chemi, James, **Encyclopedia of Designs, Designers, Engravers, Artists of the United States Postage Stamps, 1847-1900**, J.W. Stowell Printing Co., Federalsburg, MD



Datz, Stephen R., **Stamp Investing**, General Philatelic Corporation, Loveland, CO, 1997

Deaville, A. S., **The Colonial Postal Systems and Postage Stamps of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1849-1871**, Charles F. Banfield, Victoria, B.C., 1928

Goodwin, Frank E., **United States Department Stamps**, Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News, Boston, MA, ca. 1915

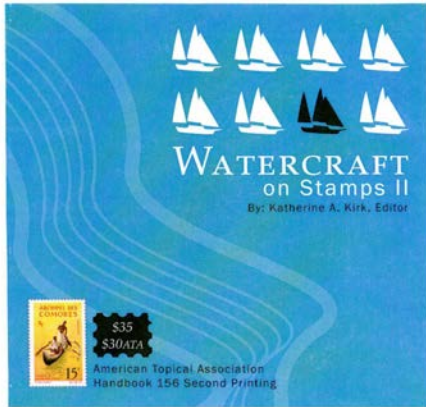
Grant, Washington, **How to Become a Stamp Dealer**, Severn-Wylie-Jewett, Beverly, MA,

Interphil76 Catalogue, Philadelphia International Philatelic Exhibition, Inc. 1976

Jalil, Guillermo Alejandro, **Catalogo Especializado De Sellos Postales De La Republica Argentina**, Printed in Argentina, 2009

Kantor, Alvin Robert and Marjorie Sered Kantor, **Sanitary Fairs: A Philatelic and Historical Study of Civil War Benevolences**, SF Publishing, Glencoe, IL, 1992

Kimble, Ralph A., **Commemorative Postage Stamps of the United States**, Grosset and Dunlap, N.Y., 1936



Kirk, Katherine A., **Watercraft on Stamps II, ATA Handbook #156 on DVD**, American Topical Association, Carterville, IL, 2013

Kunze, Albert, **The Presidential Series**, Tanki Mail Advertising Service, Pittsburg, PA, 1939

McDaniel, Gayle, **State Flags on Stamps**, Amos Press, Sidney, OH, 1979

Minkus, **Stamp Catalog, Russia, 1981-1982**, Minkus Publishing, NY, 1981

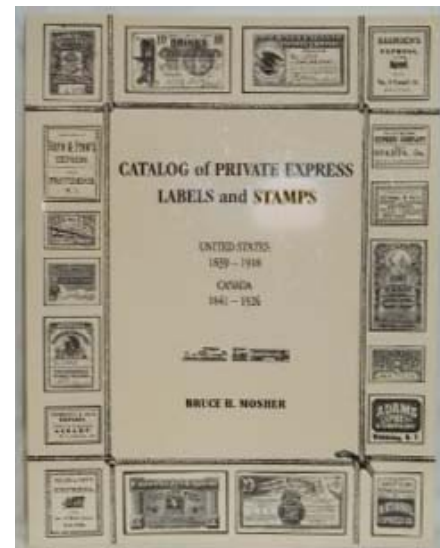
Mosher, Bruce H., **Catalog of Private Express Labels and Stamps: United States 1839-1918; Canada 1841-1926**, Bruce H. Mosher, Indialantic, FL, 2002

Post Office Department, **A Description of United States Postage Stamps**, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1933

Post Office Department, **A Description of United States Postage Stamps**, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1937

Reimann, Paul, **The Birthplace of the Northwest Territory**, Marietta Northwest Territory Celebration Commission, Marietta, GA, 1938

Siegel, Robert, **Auction Catalog – The Lewis F. Golin Collection of Outstanding United States Stamps**, June 25, 1999



Siegel, Robert, **Auction Catalog - United States Stamps and Covers: A Quality Collection of 19th and 20th Century Stamps, Specialized Washington-Franklin Issues and Hawaii**, June 26, 1999

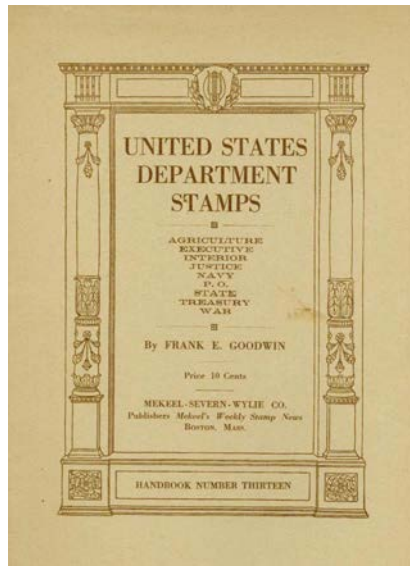
Spector, Gus, **An Exact Reproduction of the Book Containing Specimens Showing Obverse and Reverse of Every Official Invitation, Ticket, Pass, and Internal Revenue Stamp Issued or Used at The International Exhibition – 1876**, 1992

Stevenson, Wm. L., **United States Grills**, Triad Publications, Weston, MA, 1940

The Sun [Newspaper], **United States Commemorative Notes**, “The Stamp Collector” published every Saturday in The Sun, 1934

Thomas, Oscar Melton, **The Western Express Companies, 1850-1890: A Catalog of their Franks and Hand Stamps, Vol. 1 & 2**, United States Postal Stationary Society, Chester, VA, 2013

Townsend, Capt. A. C., **United States Commemorative Stamp Facts**, Linprint, Inc., Columbus, OH, 1935



Drop by on July 27 for our Birthday BBQ

On Saturday, July 27, the Northwest Philatelic Library celebrates its 10th anniversary as a non-profit organization. The library has grown significantly in the past decade. Please stop by and check out what's new on our shelves.

We will host an open house on that Saturday from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., including a free barbecue from noon to 3 p.m., serving hot dogs and hamburgers with all the trimmings – and, of course, a cake. At 12:30 we will have a short program sharing the history of the Northwest Philatelic Library, and our vision for the future.



JULY 2013

	1 OSS Bd Mtg 7:00	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 OSS Mtg. 8 p.m. Library opens at 6:30	10	11	12	13 Rose City Stamp Fair 10-4 Library 10-2
14	15 NPL Bd Mtg 7:00	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 OSS Mtg. 8 p.m. Library opens at 6:30	24	25	26	27 Collectors Corner 10-4 NPL Birthday BBQ
28	29	30	31			

August 2013

				1	2	3
4	5 OSS Board Mtg. 7 p.m.	6	7	8	9	10 Rose City Stamp Fair 10-4 Lib. 10-2
11	12	13 OSS Mtg. 8 p.m. Library opens at 6:30	14	15 NPL Board Mtg 7 p.m.	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24 Collector's Corner 10-4 Lib. 10-2
25	26	27 OSS Mtg. 8 p.m. Lib. 6:30	28	29	30	31

Library Notes

Orlie Trier, NPL President

10th Anniversary

On July 27, the Northwest Philatelic Library, as we know it today, will celebrate its 10th anniversary; prior to that it was known as the Harold D. Peterson Library. We thank Harold for his vision and Charles Neyhart who was instrumental to forming the library in 2003. The library has grown significantly. Make sure and check out what is new on our shelves (see pages 7-9).

We will have an open house on that day from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., with a free barbecue from noon till 3 p.m., serving hot dogs and hamburgers with all the trimmings. Come and see what else we will have on the menu. At 12:30 we'll present a short program sharing the history of the Northwest Philatelic Library and our vision for the future.

Sharing Your Stamps Interest

We are always looking for articles (from a short paragraph to multiple pages) to include in *Book Reports*. If you have researched something, here is a great opportunity to share this with our readers. Often times when I read an article it provides me with a new thought or idea and leads me to research a new area.

In Appreciation

To the individuals listed below who have made recent donations of literature and other considerations to NPL, we thank you for your generosity. We want to assure you that we will make good use of these resources for our fellow philatelist and collectors.

Tim Greene	Wayne Weatherl
Dwight Edmonds	Rex Bates
Gary Wright	Michael Dixon

THANK YOU all for your support!

Books We Have ... Books We Need

Did you know the Northwest Philatelic Library has a large backlog (about 300) of duplicate books for sale? We regularly receive donated items that are already in our collection. These extra books and catalogs are kept on a shelf behind the main library desk -- come take a look! These are discounted priced and we'll consider any reasonable offer.

The NPL is also seeking books and periodicals to fill holes in various runs and series. These include certain Philatelic Congress Books, ATA Handbooks, and some older U.S. Official Postal Guides. Some of our journal needs are American Philatelist (1952 and earlier), the Essay-Proof Journal, and select issues of the Transit Postmark Collector from the 1950s. There are also many others; you'll find the full list on our website at www.nwpl.org/FillingHoles.htm.

In Memoriam

In recent weeks two prominent members of the Northwest Philatelic Library died, following months of illness.



We remember Thomas Current who died on May 26. He was a member of the Oregon Stamp Society and was instrumental in founding the NW Philatelic Library, serving as Secretary Emeritus for many years. He was a major supporter and contributor of philatelic material, particularly British Commonwealth, which was his specialty. He frequently came just to visit and see what new was happening at the library. We will miss his visits.

We remember Richard “Rich” Averill who died on June 10. He was a member of the Oregon Stamp Society and served on the board for the NW Philatelic Library. He provided welcome guidance on our risk management. For the last few years he also served as a dealer with his brother Don. We will miss Rich and his leadership on the Board.



Northwest Philatelic Library, Inc.

President – *Orlie Trier*, Secretary – *Don Overstreet*, Treasurer – *Jim Correy*, Directors: *Greg Alexander, Darlene Lengacher, Isaac Oelgart and Wayne Weatherl*. Director of Sales – *Larry Spray*.

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