

# NEWFOUNDLAND:1887 HALF CENT DOG

## DISCOVERY OF THREE IMAGE SIZES

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In 2025, we were checking a large quantity of this stamp denomination from the 1880-1898 British American Bank Note Company, Montreal issue. We were looking for the known varieties, as listed in the current *Walsh Newfoundland Specialized Stamp Catalogue*, when we made a discovery. Since 1887, its possible appearance has gone completely unobserved by Newfoundland stamp aficionados.

By chance, while examining one half cent black dog image, another of the same landed on top. The way it landed, overlaying the position of the first stamp, it became clear that the second stamp was different from the first.

### It was a larger size.

What a search ensued! Many samples were examined. Stamps were compared for differences in both the vertical and horizontal directions. Robert Cooperman of [www.citystamps.ca](http://www.citystamps.ca) provided scans of items from his inventory. Thank you, Robert. Items from Garvey and Sons Stamps [www.garveyandsons.com](http://www.garveyandsons.com) inventory were loaned to us and items from the Robin J. Moore collection were used in the study.

From our findings, it was found that the black stamp in fig 1 was 0.5mm larger in size in the vertical direction. Other examples were found to have this same 0.5mm size difference in the horizontal direction (see fig 2).



Fig 1 Two copies of the half cent black dog stamp of 1894. The right hand copy is smaller in the vertical direction than that on the left.



Fig 2 Two copies of the half cent black dog stamp of 1894. The lower stamp is smaller in the horizontal direction than that above.

A further comparison against the orange colour and rose red colour dog image was initiated. Again, it was observed that the orange half cent dog in the images in figs 3, 4 and 5 show these same size differences in the vertical direction. Fig 5 shows that for the small stamp sample seen by ourselves, the horizontal size was the same for all stamps. To do more measurements on the rose red and orange coloured stamps would require access to large quantities of material, not readily accessible to us.



*Fig 3 Orange dog stamp of 1896 compared to the rose red stamp of 1888. There is a marked difference in the vertical image dimension.*



*Fig 4 Trio of stamps in various shades showing a 0.5mm vertical size difference.*

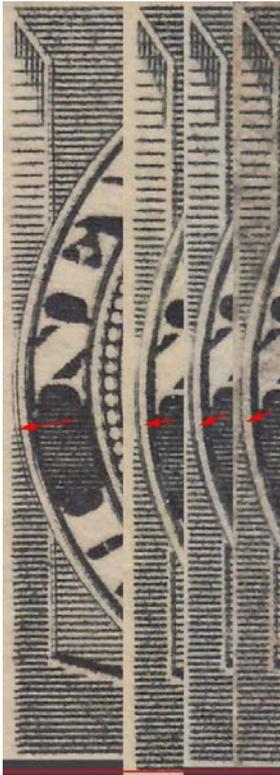


*Fig 5 The same trio of stamps arranged to show the horizontal image size which is the same for all three.*

The images in fig 6 overleaf show that the black dog image has a clear vertical size difference. The left vertical oval also shows the major re-entry.

We were also able to make some size comparisons against the blue colour trials of this stamp. Figs 7 and 8 overleaf show, respectively, vertical size comparisons and horizontal size comparisons.

In conducting this study, one of the authors used a physical metric ruler while the other used electronic measurements. Whilst the two methods gave slightly different readings,



*Fig 6 Images of four black stamps clearly showing a difference in the vertical image size. Note that the left vertical oval also shows the major re-entry.*

*Fig 7 Vertical size comparisons of the various stamp colours set against the blue colour trial.*





*Fig 8 Horizontal size comparisons of the various stamp colours set against the blue colour trial.*

they both provided clear evidence of size differences. We found that the ‘issued normal’ or ‘quantity volume’ size for the black dog stamps was 19.25 x 19.25mm or 19.5 x 19.5mm depending on the measuring method used.

The image in fig 9 shows a black top margin block, a black single, a blue colour trial, a rose red stamp and an orange stamp. When the items in the group were measured the results were as follows:-

Blue pair (colour trial, no gum, wove paper) is square at 19.25 x 19.25mm or 19.5 x 19.5mm

The black marginal block also measured at 19.25 x 19.25mm or 19.5 x 19.5mm

The single black stamp measured at 19.0 x 19.5mm

The rose red stamp measured at 19.25 x 19.25mm or 19.5 x 19.5mm and

The orange stamp measured at 18.5 x 19.25mm or 19.0 x 19.5mm



*Fig 9 Group of stamp images, including pair of the blue colour trial, subject to measurement.*

So, why is there either a horizontal or separate vertical size difference of the same printed engraved Newfoundland half cent dog image in its various colours?

From our observations, some of the printed images were applied to paper sheets having a clear grain or weave. This would explain the finding of different sized dog stamps in horizontal or in vertical measurements. At this time in paper printing history, printing presses made use of dampened paper sheets to press against the inked engraved printing plates. This wetted paper enabled the engraving to penetrate the paper to leave a visible printed image on to its surface. To enable continued handling of this wet printed paper it now had to be dried. As the paper dries, the grain/ weave spacing closes up or shrinks together. When this shrinking occurs, it causes a change to the original size of the printed image as it was applied to the dampened paper in either the vertical or horizontal direction of the paper grain/weave.

The direction of the paper grain/ weave as the paper is placed onto the printing press will determine whether the image shrinks in a horizontal or a vertical plane when drying. Usually, the paper grain/ weave direction for application onto the press has been determined by the size of the engraved image plate to be printed. In most cases, this engraved plate is rectangular in shape. The paper sheets would then be cut in proportion to match the size of the printing plate. However, fig 10 opposite shows that the half cent dog image sheet is square and not rectangular.

With a squared format sheet size it would be very easy to incorrectly position the grain/ weave paper direction onto the press. There would be no misprinting consequences regardless of which way the paper sheets were fed into the press. Visually, the final printed image size differences would not be obvious until well after the gum layering has dried and, even then, if observed, they would probably not be regarded as significant. From these findings we can conclude that the Newfoundland half cent dog stamp made by the British American Bank Note Company (BABNCo) has images of three different sizes:

- a) The horizontal side is the same size as the vertical side at 19.5 x 19.5mm This sizing would confirm that the paper used for the printing is on wove paper, whereby the paper did not shrink in any direction. This size is also seen on the blue plate proof colour trials which were printed on wove paper.
- b) The horizontal side is smaller than the vertical side at 19.0 x 19.5mm. This is due to the stamp being printed on paper having a horizontal grain/weave which shrank when dried.
- c) The vertical side is smaller than the horizontal side at 19.5 x 19.0mm. This is due to the stamp being printed on paper having a vertical grain/ weave which shrank when dried.

These differences have to do with the unintentional incorrect orientation of the grain/ weave paper on to the press.

We continued examination of the other, rectangular image, stamps found in this BABNCo 1880 - 1898 issue that we had access to and have not observed this size

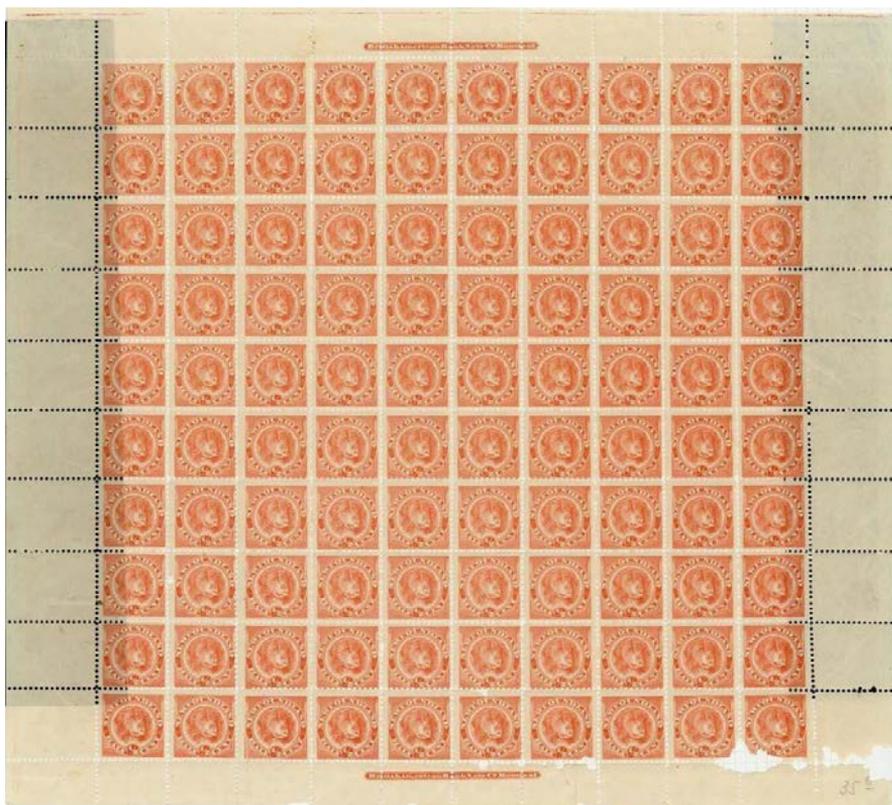


Fig 10 NSSC 'Spink' sheet of 100 of the orange dog stamp.

difference in any of the other stamps of the issue. Our results suggest that the printing sheet for the half cent dog value was of a square format. The use of a square format for the paper sheets provided a way of saving paper costs but equally resulted in some of the sheets being applied at 90 degrees to the layout of the grain/ weave from that which was intended.

Reference to *Canada's Postage Stamps of the Small Queen Era, 1870 – 1897* by John Hillson and Ted Nixon highlights that, at this time, the BABNCo printers were based in Montreal and the company (page 19) were using multiple different paper types of differing qualities. As Newfoundland's stamps at this time were also being printed by the BABNCo in Montreal it would seem reasonable to assume that the paper being used to print these Newfoundland stamps was equally variable. We are not aware whether this type of stamp image sizing has been studied for the Canada Small Queens issue but what an adventure a researcher would encounter. (*Editor's note: worth noting that all the Small Queen stamps are rectangular in shape/ sizing*).

So, as our spouses said to us.... 'boys, it is time to let sleeping dogs lie'.