

# NEWFOUNDLAND: HOW THE BLITZ STAMPS WERE CREATED

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In 1929, the Newfoundland Government placed its requisitioned postage stamp orders with John Dickinson & Co as their stamp procurement contractor. This company had the Croxley Mills paper making business. It was the procurement contractor who then went looking to hire a printing company who could do detailed image engraving, then position multiples of the engraved image on to a metal plate, produce formulated coloured inks and then print the engraved plate on to paper sheets using its own printing presses. The printing company chosen was Perkins Bacon & Co (PB&Co) who had been in business since the 1850's. This same printer, prior to 1929, had engraved and printed Newfoundland's 1857, 1860 and 1861 Pence Issue stamps.

Newfoundland's 1931 postage stamp issue was printed on paper that had the newly introduced feature of having an embedded security element called a 'watermark'. For Newfoundland's security paper this device consisted of the Croxley Mills papermaking company embedding into its stamp printing paper a layout form of a simplified stylized form taken from Newfoundland's coat-of-arms image.



*Newfoundland Coat of Arms*



*Stylized version*

In 1932 Newfoundland requisitioned designs for another postage stamp series. This series stamp collectors call the First Resources Issue. The contractor, John Dickinson & Co, again utilized PB&Co to do the engraving designs and the printing. It was during the issuance of this postage series that the PB&Co business started to run into its printing problems.

In 1926 the newly introduced high speed dry paper printing became commercialized. This printing process revolutionized paper printing. It enabled engraved printing plates to be utilized without the need to water soften the paper. The original wet paper printing method utilized low pressure to enable the penetration of the inked engraved plate into this soft paper to leave a clear visual image. This wet paper technique incorporated the employment of many workers to process the various steps necessary to do that printing procedure. The new printing technique with the dry paper presses allowed the printing work to be done with a much smaller workforce. This press utilized very high pressure to force the dry paper into the engraved printing plates. For the engraved plates to withstand such pressure they had to be specially strengthened by hardening the metal.

The unhardened wet paper plates could not withstand such heavy pressure.

During the early stages of printing the Newfoundland 1932 stamp issue PB&Co tried to utilize both printing press types. This is instantly shown when both of the 2 cent green King George VI die I (at 20.5 mm) and die II (at 21 mm) printed stamp images sizes are short side compared. They were both printed at the same time and released on the same date of 15 August 1932.

The dry paper printing press was a propriety invention and would be available from the maker. Some printing companies tried to remake / build their own wet paper printing presses to do the heavy pressure printing technique. In their efforts they seemed to have forgotten that the dry printing plates had to be hardened, usually with chrome, to prevent fracturing, usually called hairlines by stamp collectors or total plate breakage. From the philatelic marketplace can be found many samples of such damage that are visible from surviving PB&Co printed Newfoundland stamp material. Other countries, including Canada, also show this stamp printing problem when their contracted printing companies used unhardened print plates under the required heavy strenuous pressure.

The Newfoundland black plate proof sheets held in the estate of A. J. Hubbard (chairman of the PB&Co) containing the images of the 1932 stamp issue were misidentified when they were sold by Kasmir Bileski. These proof sheets prove that printing plates having the PB&Co engraved stamp images were used to print Newfoundland postage stamps on dry paper presses. This is determined by the difference in the printed image sizes of wet paper 20.5 mm compared to the 21 mm dry paper size. They also have dates provided by the printers on some of the sheets showing printing dates prior to May 1941.

The PB&Co Daily Ledger Book records their engraved printing plate destruction as well as their disastrous printing press destruction. From reading the PB&Co Ledger it can also be observed that there is less and less daily work being put through this company. In December 1935 PB&Co went bankrupt. This ledger book can be found in The Spears Museum of Philatelic History. In addition, its extracted Newfoundland sections are in the latest *Walsh Newfoundland Specialized Stamp Catalogue*.

In January 1936 the inventory of dies and other assorted printing assets of the Perkins Bacon & Co was acquired by a consortium involving W. W. Sprague in conjunction with some original company members. They continued to work under the auspices of the original PB&Co banner / name until 1939. This consortium continued to print postage stamps for the Newfoundland Government. The original PB&Co inventory and their presses were utilized.

In 1939 this group's same originating inventory and assets were sold to a company called Perkins Bacon Ltd (PBLtd). This can be shown as some of these black plate proof Newfoundland stamp sheets have printer employee's notations of the year date that show that the material was printed during this new company's ownership of the original inventory of PB&Co. On 10 May 1941 the printing plant of this new company was destroyed by German bombing during World War II.

This destruction in May 1941 left the Newfoundland Government stamp procurement

contractor, John Dickinson & Co, in a quandary trying to find a capable printer who could do similar quality printing as PBLtd to enable the honouring of the ongoing postage stamp printing contract. A mad scramble was undertaken by John Dickinson & Co to salvage and secure the damaged and undamaged dies and engraved printing plates.

The chosen printing company, Waterlow & Sons, was a locally situated printing company. Some denominations were found to have damaged engraved plates and needed to be repaired soonest. This was needed to keep the Newfoundland Postal Authorities in stock with postage stamp denominations that could readily make the required postal rates in effect at this time. All of this was happening prior to the new postage designs that were being designed and before being ordered by the Newfoundland Government for its 1942 postage stamp issue requirements. These 1942 orders and their printing dates can be seen in the Waterlow & Sons archives that were examined by John Ayshford and published in his informative monogram *The Last Stamps of Newfoundland* London: Robson Lowe, 1978.

The term, *Newfoundland Blitz Stamps*, as suggested by CA Stillions, was for those stamps produced from May 1941 to February 1942 by this pressed-into-service-printer who was hired to enable fulfillment of Newfoundland's previously required postage stamps through the procurement contractor John Dickinson & Co. All of this being prior to the official released contract for the Newfoundland Government's 1942 postage stamp requirements. That requisition again went through the same contractor, John Dickinson & Co, who in turn placed its requirements with their already positioned printer Waterlow & Sons.

The printer Waterlow & Sons did not print using wet paper presses. This confirmation is found by making the image short size comparisons of their 21 mm printings to that of the 20.5 mm as seen used from the image of the same salvaged original Perkins Bacon engraved plates of 1932. In addition, the general 1932 perforations are 13.5 x 13.5 versus the 1941- 42 issue at 12.5 x 12.5 perforation.

To date, as seen by the author from clearly date cancelled postal mail, only the stated specific sized Newfoundland's 2¢, 3¢ and 4¢ postage stamp images have been found dated between May 1941 and February 1942. *Newfoundland: the Stamp Printing Transition Sequence from the First Resources Issue to the Second Resources Issue.* John M. Walsh, FRPSC; *Maple Leaves* Vol. 38 No. 1 January 2023 Whole No. 367.

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Denomination	Cancel date	Image size	Perforation	Waterlow & Sons archives
2 cents	14 Nov 1941	21mm	12.5 x 12.5	Feb 1942
3 cents	15 Oct 1941	21mm	12.5 x 12.5	Feb 1942
4 cents	1 Oct 1941	21mm	12.5 x 12.5	Feb 1942

Are other denominations from the same 1932 issued images in the 21 mm size and perforated 12.5 x 12.5 to be found on clear-dated posted May 1941 to February 1942 cancelled mail? Only time will tell. As was usually the case, stamps were regularly removed from the received posted mail. The lesser utilized higher denomination images were more attractive to get for the ardent stamp collector of the day. The finding of these very elusive properly cancelled envelopes is a challenge.

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