

NEWFOUNDLAND: 1887 HALF CENT DOG

DISCOVERY OF IMAGE EXTRANEEOUS AND RANDOM POSITIONAL DOTS

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Following up on our discovery of the previously unrecorded three different image sizes for the 1887 Newfoundland Half Cent Dog stamp (see *Maple Leaves* Vol. 39 no 6 April 2026 pp 317 – 326) another discovery finding was observed inside this same dog image. We just had to ‘let the dogs out’ because as with the findings of the three image sizes, these image design details have gone unobserved since 1887.

Our studies found extraneous positional dots inside the image design.

What an observation! Definitely a random positioning. Many stamp image samples in red, orange and black colours were examined. Robert Cooperman of City Stamps, Montreal kindly provided scans of items from his inventory. Thank you, Robert. Items from Garvey & Sons Stamps inventory were loaned to us. Items from Robin J. Moore’s collection were also used and Allan Goulding offered a selection of his dog stamp inventory for the study.

The first thing we observed on the orange red, rose red top sheet margins as well as on the black top and bottom sheet margins were the columnar sheet ‘positional dots’. These would have been intentional and expected to be present as they were a marking that the siderographer made to help with the laying out positioning of the transfer plate die. Fig 1 shows these dots in the top margin above the stamps (highlighted as they are otherwise hard to spot). See Ref 1.

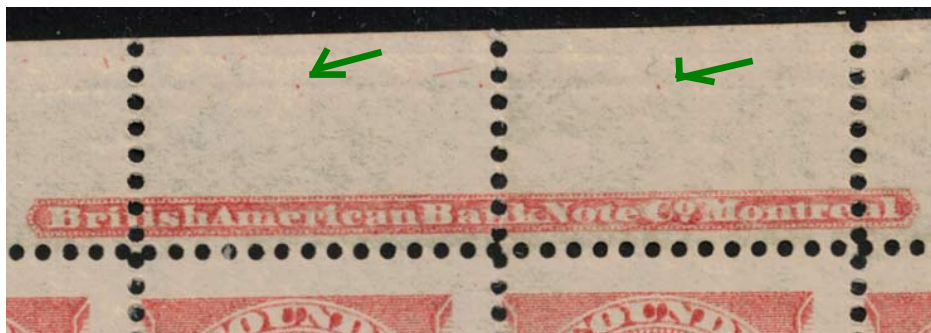


Fig 1 Top margin strip of the dog stamp showing the positional dots (highlighted) put on deliberately to help with the laying out of the plate.

The bottom marginal inscription strip of four of the black colour dog stamp shown in fig 2 below also shows these siderographer positioning dots. Look closely and you will see small dots below the ½ numeral and on the centre two stamps just above the inscription.



Fig 2 Bottom margin strip of the dog stamp in black. The positional dots can be seen just below the ½ numeral and above the imprint.

The block in fig 3 shows something a little different. This rose red upper left corner block has the position dots in the upper margin as above. However, the stamps in positions 11 and 12 show a previously unreported dot in the upper right arm of the U of Newfoundland – see the digital image cuts in figs 4 and 5. The stamps in the top row show nothing in the U – see digital image cut in fig 6.



Fig 3



Fig 4 Showing detail of stamps from positions 11 and 12 in above block,



Fig 5 Blow up detail showing the dot in the upper right arm of the U.



Fig 6 Similar detail from stamp in top row showing no dot.

When you draw a vertical alignment line down from the marginal positional dot and take it down through the stamp image it transects the upper right arm of the U in Newfoundland.

We carried out an extensive study of the black dog stamps (relatively available versus the red or orange dog) and found that the dot in the U of Newfoundland is random. In our observations it was found that only some of these half cent dog stamps have what seems to us to be random *possible* 'positional dot' placements into the image. Fig 7 shows digital cuts of some 16 stamps. If you look at the upper right in the U letters you will see dots in some but not in others. Also, the dot is not always in the same exact position inside the letter U image.

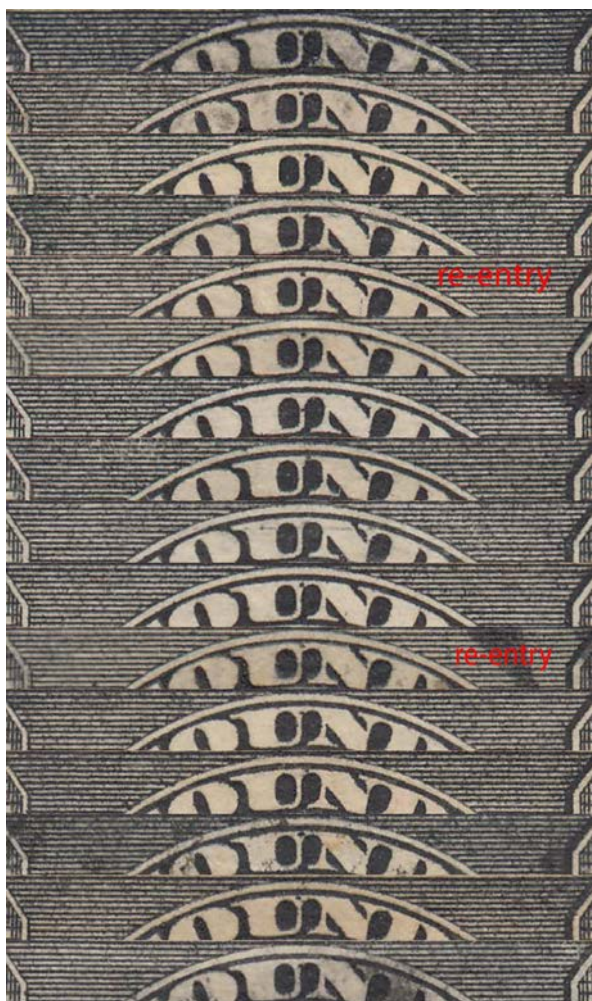


Fig 7

To us, this seems to demonstrate that the printing company's siderographer when laying out the transfer die image onto the sheet to make the printing plate may have rested the transfer device on to the plate at varying positions as the plate image was being developed. This resting spot placed a small mark like a dot into the steel plate which then took up the ink making it visible.

Normally in this process, any unintentional markings would be hidden within or by the ink of the printed image or would be burnished out of the engraved plate if they were not completely hidden in the image on the layout sheet.

As we have shown in figs 1 and 2 above, bottom marginal pieces of the black dog stamps will show intentional 'positional dots' in the margins under each column. These dots appear beneath the half numeral. The top margins of black printed sheets also show columnar 'positional dots' similar to the red-orange upper margin stamps shown in fig 1.

Further examination of these half cent dog stamps revealed another additional unknown post engraved design marking. Once again, it is found that not all of the stamp images have this additional marking. The three dog colour images in fig 8 show this finding which appears as a dot in the curlicue of the '2' in the half numeral. Fig 9 shows a digital cut of one of the stamps with the variety enlarged.



Fig 8 Dog stamp in three different colours all showing the dot in the curlicue of the '2'



Fig 9 Blow up detail of the dot in 2 variety,

Fig 10 shows a bottom margin block of 8 of the black dog stamps. In this block the upper right stamp shows this dot in the curlicue of the 2 in the half numeral. The enlarged digital cut in fig 11 shows the dot more clearly and also demonstrates that this dot in the 2 curlicue is in alignment with the columnar sheet margin 'positional dot'.



Fig 10 above - Block of the black dog stamp with the upper right stamp showing the dot in 2 variety'

Fig 11 at right - shows a blow up of the variety and the alignment with the positional dot in the bottom margin.



The dog image in fig 12 overleaf is in a wonderful deep red colour. It also shows the dot in the curlicue of the 2 in the half numeral in the same position as the other colour stamps shown from this study. Fig 13 overleaf shows an enlarged digital cut of the stamp to better illustrate the dot.

Finally, we examined a blue colour trial plate proof on wove paper (see fig 14 overleaf). This proof pair shows no dots in either the U or in the 2 curlicue. However, knowing how random these 'dots' are on the printed sheets it would require more than a plate proof pair to reach any conclusions.

Following up on these two Newfoundland Dog image studies, we hope that other researchers will examine their own stamps from this 1880 – 98 BABNCo issue; especially the other designs. Other than m'buddy the Shadow, who knows what secrets lurk.



Fig 12 Dog stamp in deep red showing the dot in 2 variety.



Fig 13 Blow up of the stamp in fig 12 to better show the variety.

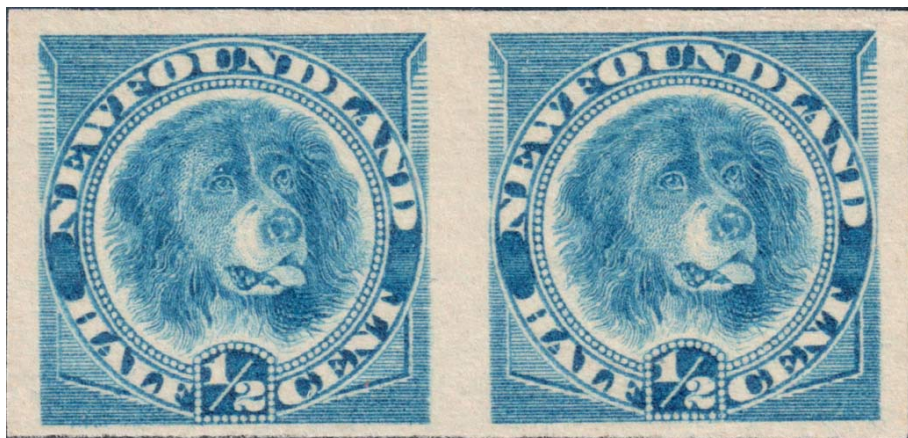


Fig 14 Colour trial proof pair in blue. This pair shows neither of the dot varieties described in this article.

References:-

1. Position Dots and Layout Lines by Stephen G. Rich. Essay- Proof Society Journal October 1954, Vol 11, no 4, Whole number 44, page 179.

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