

Vincent Graves Greene Philatelic Research Foundation

Expert Committee Analysis of Block of Canada Scott #139 With Inverted Overprint

Garfield Portch FRPSC

In July 2018 the Greene Foundation received a Request for Expertization for a block of 4 stamps identified by the submitter as Scott #139 var.. The submission was recorded as #12339 in folio 18-152 to be examined during the August 2018 meeting of the Expert Committee.



In the course of the Committee meeting, the submission was viewed by all present with four members formally examining and recording their observations and opinions. Without spelling out the full observations, the key notes from the examiners were:

- 1) Stamps are genuine but the overprint is by favour as no inverts were sold.
- 2) Stamp is genuine and surcharge matches known electrotype but is probably a favour or a private overprint.
- 3) Examination using the VSC6000 to compare the overprint with known genuine examples shows that the overprints on the submission map very well with examples in the reference collection. The texture of the overprint on the submission does not appear to have the same surface shine as genuine examples.
- 4) Stamp is not the same colour as examples in the reference collection. The surcharge is not the same as genuine examples but the design match is good.

Prior to the writing of a concluding opinion, the submission was taken to **BNAPEX** where it was shown to a number of dealers and knowledgeable collectors. Not one of those considered the item to be genuine.

On September 25, 2018 the Expert Committee issued certificate #F5149 stating “**Canada Scott No. 130b, mint, OG, block of four , with fake 2 CENTS surcharge**”.

The block and certificate were returned to the submitter. Shortly thereafter, the submitter requested that we re-examine the block and consider amending our opinion. Nothing was found to justify a change in the opinion of the Committee. The submission and certificate were returned to the submitter on February 20, 2019 with a covering letter explaining the final decision.

copy of letter and certificate on next page

NOTE: In keeping our privacy policy the submitter's name has been removed



No. F 5149

VINCENT GRAVES GREENE PHILATELIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION

10 Summerhill Avenue, Toronto, Canada M4T 1A8

Member A.I.E.P.

DATE: September 25, 2018
COMMENTS: Canada Scott No. 130b, mint, OG, block of four, with fake 2 CENTS surcharge.

ISSUED TO: [Redacted]



VINCENT GRAVES GREENE PHILATELIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION

By: [Signature]

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ANY TAMPERING WITH THIS CERTIFICATE RENDERS IT VOID

February 20, 2019

VIA FEDEX
Signature Requested

Dear [Redacted]

Re: Certificate F5149 – #139 with Inverted Overprint

The Committee has reviewed the 3 cent Carmine block with the inverted 2 CENTS surcharge and at this point is not prepared to change the opinion that the surcharge is not original.

We have found no other copies with genuine inverted surcharges. We do have a couple with badly forged inverted surcharges. Also we have asked several Admiral experts, and none believe there was a genuine inverted surcharge nor have they seen one.

We have reviewed several major Admiral collections in auction catalogues and seen no inverted surcharges. We are not aware of the Lussey collection catalogue or any photos of Ed Weiner's material. If you wish to do some research to come up with real other examples we will review the item again.

We do observe that the submitted block of four is not the same colour red as genuine surcharged copies. Also the black surcharge does not have the same shine to the ink as genuine copies. But we do note that the shape of the letters in the surcharge is very close to the genuine copies.

We are returning with this letter the block of four and our certificate F5149 dated September 25, 2018.

Yours truly,

Ted Nixon
Chairman

In the April 2020 edition of *Maple Leaves*, the Journal of the Canadian Philatelic Society of Great Britain, there was a two page article entitled **POTENTIAL NEW ADMIRAL VARIETY REAPPEARS AFTER 42 YEARS.**

The article presents details of the history and provenance of this block of stamps which, by examination of the photograph, is undoubtedly the block previously examined by the Greene Foundation.

POTENTIAL NEW ADMIRAL VARIETY REAPPEARS AFTER 42 YEARS

and Graham Searle FCPS

Back in October 2017, Julian Goldberg and John Walsh wrote an article in *Maple Leaves* on the 1926 Admiral Provisional Overprints (ref 1). Your Editor provided the pictures for this article and amongst these was a picture of a forgery of an inverted overprint of the one line surcharge (Scott type 139) – reproduced below as fig 1.



The caption below the original picture contained the kind of wording an Editor should know better than to use..... 'A variety that does not exist – at least in genuine form'

This is, of course, similar to saying 'this is the only known example' – an expression which inevitably leads to several 'Letters to the Editor' highlighting other copies!

Back in 1978, when Ariel was still in short trousers and just starting out as a budding stamp dealer, he met up with George Marler who showed him the block of four in fig 2 below.

Fig 1

George was very proud of it and Carl Mangold and Hans Reiche, who were also present in the meeting, were also suitably impressed. George told us the story of how he had come to own the block which Ariel recalls here.....

Apparently, George was offered the opportunity to purchase a complete sheet of 100 subjects with the inverted overprint, however due to very poor handling of the sheet many of the stamps were creased and some badly torn and out of the full sheet he managed to find a sound and clean block of four. George had been offered the stamps by a Captain Bernier, a retired Montreal Police Department Captain, who having been injured in



Fig 2

the line of duty had then turned to stamp dealing. He went on to explain to us, with some pain in his voice, that the Captain had offered him the complete sheet for the enormous sum of \$2 and that the block of four that he had selected would cost him \$1. George was well known for being rather frugal and, living up to this reputation, he only purchased the block of four for the 'whopping sum' of \$1. As he was telling the story and quoting

the prices my mouth nearly hit my stamp counter and the others in the office at the time were equally shocked. George, being George, could see nothing unusual in the tale and was quite content with his block of four.

George passed away some years later and I discovered that the block in question had been sold to his old friend Harry Lussey. Needless to say, we were all heartbroken that the block had departed Canada for the USA.

Well time has passed by and Harry himself is now dead and the block of four has reappeared.

Is it genuine? Well the overprint certainly looks good and is very comparable (albeit upside down!) to those on the plate strip shown in fig 3 below.

The overprints were done on panes of 100 stamps and as the original article indicated there was a huge amount of wastage with many varieties – double overprints, pairs with and without etc – finding their way into the philatelic market. Consequently, the existence of another variety – with the overprint inverted – is certainly not impossible. Of course, if it is genuine there should be another 96 examples – many with creases and some badly torn - out there waiting to be found.

Despite being issued nearly 100 years ago, it is amazing how new varieties on the Admiral stamps keep being discovered – another one was highlighted in the April 2018 issue of our journal (ref 2)

Maybe time for your Editor to have another closer look at his forgery!

References:

1. Canada 1926 Provisional 2 cents Surcharges on King George V- Admiral Issue; Julian Goldberg and John Walsh, *Maple Leaves* Oct 2017 pp 219 – 228
2. A Major 1 Cent Yellow Admiral Lathework Re-discovery; Leopold Beaudet, *Maple Leaves* Apr 2018 pp 303 - 310



Fig 3

I was tempted to write a letter to the editor immediately following my first reading of this article. However, it is a policy of the Greene Foundation to maintain details of submissions in absolute confidence out of respect for the submitter. I did, however, undertake more research in the VGG reference library.

On July 9, 2020 a posting by 'jogil' was entered on the Stamp Community Forum (https://www.stampcommunity.org/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=73402) announcing the discovery of a new and unique variety that had been recently certified as genuine by The American Philatelic Expertizing Service.



After some irrelevant banter by other Forum contributors, another posting was entered by 'jogil'.



Additionally, on July 9, as President of the Greene Foundation, I received an email from Robin Harris. He, as editor of the *Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps* had received an email (source undisclosed to me) advising that APEX had certified the block as genuine.

Later that evening I received a telephone call from Jesse Robitaille of *Canadian Stamp News*. Jesse was looking for a comment as he planned to feature the story of the discovery in the next upcoming issue. His main question was ‘why did the Greene Foundation refuse to examine this item?’ Due to client confidentiality I was unable to tell him that we had examined the item and given a bad certificate. At this point I realized that the story was going out of control and requested that Jesse allow me to talk “off the record”

Off the record Jesse revealed that he had been contacted by an individual (whose name is not relevant to the story) who told him that the Greene Foundation would not touch the item! I then asked Jesse to hold off on the publication of the story until such time as facts could be checked and confirmed. He agreed and has published nothing.

Shortly after this story broke I phoned the Submitter and asked him if the APEX certification was true. He replied in the affirmative and promptly send me a scan of the certificate and of the 4 page supplementary report produced by APEX.

During the conversation he also told me that he does not own this item but is acting on behalf of a client who chooses to remain anonymous. I asked if the client would be willing to return the item to the Greene Foundation in order that we could replicate the tests done by APEX using the VSC6000. I stated that the VGG would re-examine the item and, if we changed our opinion, would issue a new certificate to that effect.

Because this entire process had become a public issue, I also asked for permission to publish the results of our findings whether they were in his favour or not. In an email dated August 13, 2020, that permission was given on the condition that he is first to see the report.

The owners of the block have no issue and accept that you pass on your findings with the public as have the APS.

Between you and I, if your findings are different than the APS. they may not be very happy with that and could possibly cause a situation, your call!

Please let me know your thoughts and findings before you go public, I would like the owners to know before hand.

In *The American Philatelist* (August 2020, page 727) the expertizing of this stamp is revealed and documented in an article entitled 'Expertizing Discoveries, Findings, Confirmations and Goofs'.

The Re-Examination Process

The process was broken into four distinct steps:

- * Checking the previous findings of the Greene Foundation
- * Replicating the examination process used by the American Philatelic Society
- * A logical and deductive analysis of the possibilities presented by this block of stamps
- * An additional forensic examination of the submission using the VSC6000

Step 1: Re-examination of Original Findings

A review of the processes used in the original certification of this submission showed that everything was consistent with the type of work we usually do when examining stamps with overprints. It was confirmed that the stamps themselves are unquestionably genuine in all respects. Work was, therefore, concentrated on the overprint.

As it is not possible to undertake spectrographic analysis of black ink, the examination concentrated on the optical appearance of the ink and the match of the type with known genuine examples.

To supplement the negative opinions expressed unanimously by the Expert Committee members, the submission was also taken to BNAPEX where it was examined by a number of dealers and by members of the Admiral Study Group. Again, opinions were unanimously negative.

The conclusion, for this report is that the Expert Committee of the Greene Foundation performed exactly as it should have done and it was justified in issuing a negative certificate.

Step 2: Examination of the APEX Certificate Process

We are grateful to the American Philatelic Expertizing Service for their willing collaboration in the examination of this ‘patient’.

In a telephone conversation with Gary Loew, the complete evaluation process used was revealed to me and a supplementary report with images from the VSC6000 were supplied. Each of the tests that APEX applied was replicated at the Greene Foundation with identical findings.

The conclusion here is that The APEX did as much as could be done with the information that they had available at the time. I believe that would have consulted the Greene Foundation if they were aware that a negative certificate had been previously issued.

Step 3: The Deductive Analysis

FACT: The King’s Printer encountered serious production problems while trying to overprint sheets of stamps that had already been trimmed and perforated. Only 500 sheets survived and they were sent to the Philatelic Bureau. All remaining sheets were destroyed.

FACT: An examination of philatelic auction catalogues held in the Greene Foundation reference library shows that there has never been a genuine example of this stamp variety offered for sale.

FACT: The Greene Foundation has been expertizing and certifying stamps of Canada since 1975 and, in that time has issued more than 30,000 certificates. Never has a genuine example of this stamp been seen by the Committee.

FACT: When the submission was taken to BNAPEX when originally submitted, not one collector, dealer or Admiral specialist considered this item as genuine.

QUESTION: If George Marler purchased this block of 4 from sheet owner by a dealer, Captain Bernier (see CPSGB story), what happened to the remaining 96 stamps? Surely a professional dealer would have sold them, even if damaged, to preferred clients.

QUESTION: Since George Marler was writing the definitive book on the Admirals, would he not more likely have purchased the entire sheet if for no reason other than study purposes?

QUESTION: In the story published in *Maple Leaves* it states that “George was very proud of it...”. If he was so proud, why does the block not get a photograph or even a mention in his book? In fact, on page 549 of the book Marler states that only two varieties are known, neither of which is the inverted overprint.

QUESTION: Since the block is reported to have been shown to Hans Reiche, why does Reiche not acknowledge its existence in any of his writings?

OBSERVATION: In the October 2020 issue of *Maple Leaves*, Leopold Beaudet writes a 2-page article with his personal assessment of this block of stamps. He stops short of providing a permanent written opinion but does provide some excellent food for thought.

CONCLUSION: This logical examination does not provide absolute or conclusive evidence but it does create the question of the existence of this item.

Step 4: Forensic Examination Using Foster+Freeman VSC6000 H/S

NOTE: Some of the forensic details are not being revealed here as their publication would be of great interest to others interested in creating fake philatelic overprints.

A number of processes for forensic examination of documents are available in the built—in technology of the VSC6000, but many of these are neither suitable nor relevant to the study of this overprint. Since it had previously been determined that the stamps themselves are genuine in all respects, it remained to examine only the black overprint.

The processes attempted were all done in comparison with a minimum of seven (7) known reference pieces.

- Overlay and subtraction of images of the submission and known references
- Spectrographic analysis of the overprint under normal white light
- Spectrographic analysis of the overprint under ultra violet light (365 nm)
- Hyperspectral imaging

The results, as expected were wide ranging and are discussed below.

Overlay Method

In this process, a high resolution image of the subject stamp is fixed in the memory. A similar high resolution image of a known reference piece is entered in the live screen which is then superimposed on the stored image. When the images are aligned one is subtracted from the other and, if they are identical, a solid grey image remains. If there are differences, they will be highlighted either in black or white.



This test was repeated with 7 known genuine reference examples on each of the four positions of the block

Conclusion: This test shows that the overprint is an excellent match for the genuine and this does confirm the comparative study undertaken by The American Philatelic Expertizing Service

Spectrographic Analysis Under Flood Light

This test was doomed to fail before it even started because it is scientifically impossible to analyse black printing.

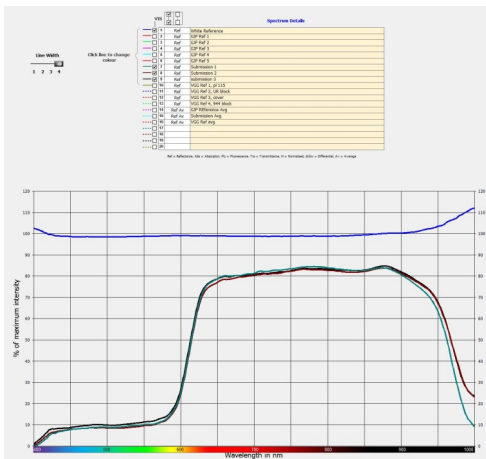
In the original examination, some examiners mentioned that they thought the colour of the genuine stamp was 'somewhat off' on the submission. The opportunity to compare the red of the stamp itself was taken and provides the reader with an example of the work involved in spectrographic analyses.

The Method

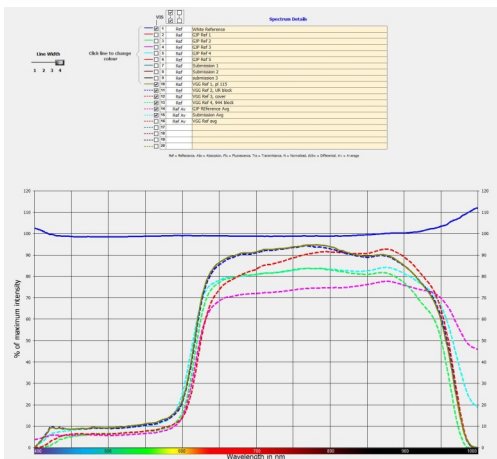
10 references and the submission were examined

A single reading was taken from each reference stamp in the identical place (shown by the arrow). These all proved to be slightly different.

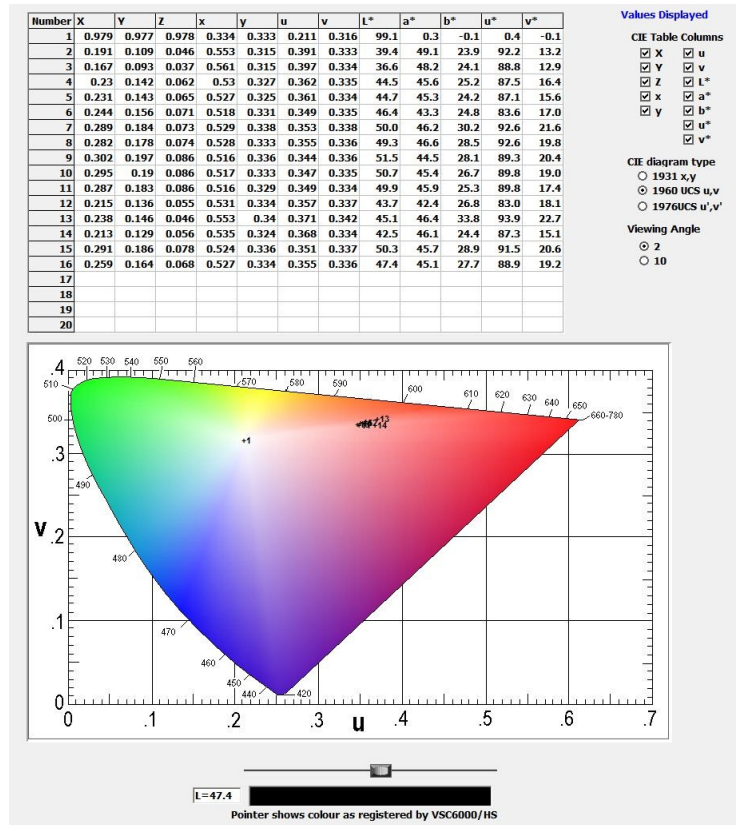
A single reading was taken from 3 of the 4 stamps in the submitted block. As expected they were identical so only an 'average' reading was used for the subsequent comparisons



Identical profiles from the submitted block



Submission compared to Greene Foundation references



Chromaticity table and chart showing 'white reference' and all other readings. The results indicate that the colours of the stamps are essentially the same as evidenced by the clustered data points.

Spectrographic Analysis Using 365 nm Ultraviolet Light

This was a test that I had never attempted but, having discovered the VSC000's ability to do it, thought it might be worth a try.

Following the same procedure outlined on the previous page, I illuminated the subject using 365 nm (long wave) ultraviolet light. I similarly selected identical points in the black ink of the surcharge and did comparative curves for both genuine overprints and known fakes in order to compare with the submission.

Although the results appeared to show some differences between genuine and known fakes, subsequent peer review by a respected physicist ruled out my results as 'scientifically incorrect' but 'nice try'.

This failed result is included in the report to show that extraordinary steps were attempted in the analysis of this specimen and, perhaps more importantly, we do have test results peer reviewed if we are not confident in our own results.

Analysis Using Hyperspectral Imaging

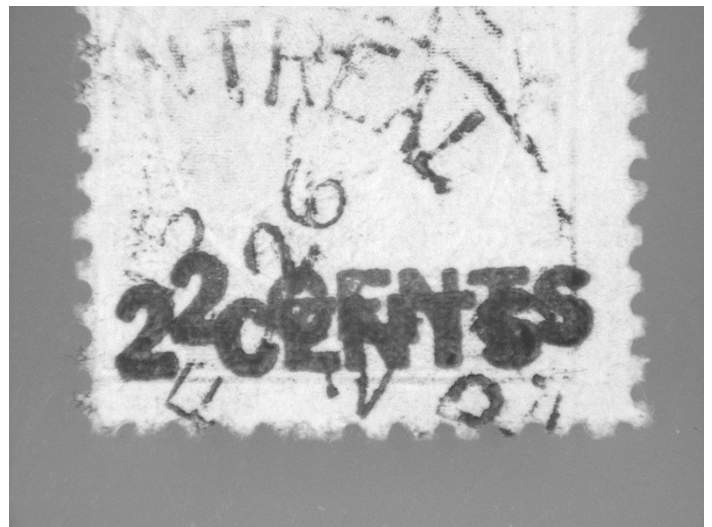
From the Foster+Freeman website: "*Hyperspectral imaging is a relatively new technique in the field of questioned document examination and had previously been considered to be an incredibly high cost method of analysis. Now integrated into the VSC6000 H/S system, HIS sensors collect and process information from across the electromagnetic spectrum combining the results into a 3 dimensional, multi layered image cube. The images that make up the cube can then be scanned through manually in real time for further analysis and examination.*"

This process emerged as 'the giant killer' in that it was able to show, beyond any shadow of doubt that there is a difference between the ink used for overprinting the genuine stamps and the more recent fakes.

For this test I borrowed the commercial inventory of genuine overprints and faked stamps from Rob Taylor, a dealer in Brampton. I combined them with a similar assembly of examples from the Greene Foundation Reference Collection.

The first item I tested was a known fake of a 'double surcharge'. As this stamp was undergoing HIS examination, I observed that one of the overprints began to fade away much earlier than the other (i.e. at a filter level of about 760 nm). It can be seen in the illustration that the upper of the 2 overprints is fading to grey while the lower (genuine) overprint is retaining its strong black appearance.

I then tested other known fakes from both collections with similar results. The final test was the questioned block which behaved exactly the same as the other fakes.



Again, having never done this test previously, I obtained a scientific peer review that confirmed the validity of my results.

Conclusion: We now have a valid test for the comparison of black ink used for surcharges. This test proved beyond any doubt that **the submitted block has a fake overprint.**

Appendix

It is useful here to include additional information uncovered during the final analysis of this submission.

From Marler's book, page 549

THE ADMIRAL ISSUE OF CANADA

the centre of the stamps in the second horizontal row of the pane. This accounted for two varieties: first, the vertical pair, the top stamp without the surcharge and the bottom stamp with the surcharge, or blocks of varying size, the top row without the next row with the surcharge; and second, stamps with a misplaced surcharge.

Stamps with a double overprint also are known.

The author finds it difficult to understand how material that departed so obviously from the normal could have been made available by the Philatelic Agency to collec-



Figure IIS.2.

549

These illustrations should help to distinguish the genuine from the faked. It would probably be useful, also, to collect a block of four in preference to a single for there are few blocks of four in which the type of surcharge is identical on all subjects.

*** **

Genuine pieces are known of which the overprint was doubled with the two overprints side by side, or one above the other. Triple overprints also are known.

Because of the ease with which the overprint can be faked, the greatest caution should be observed in acquiring double or triple overprints.



APEX Certificate

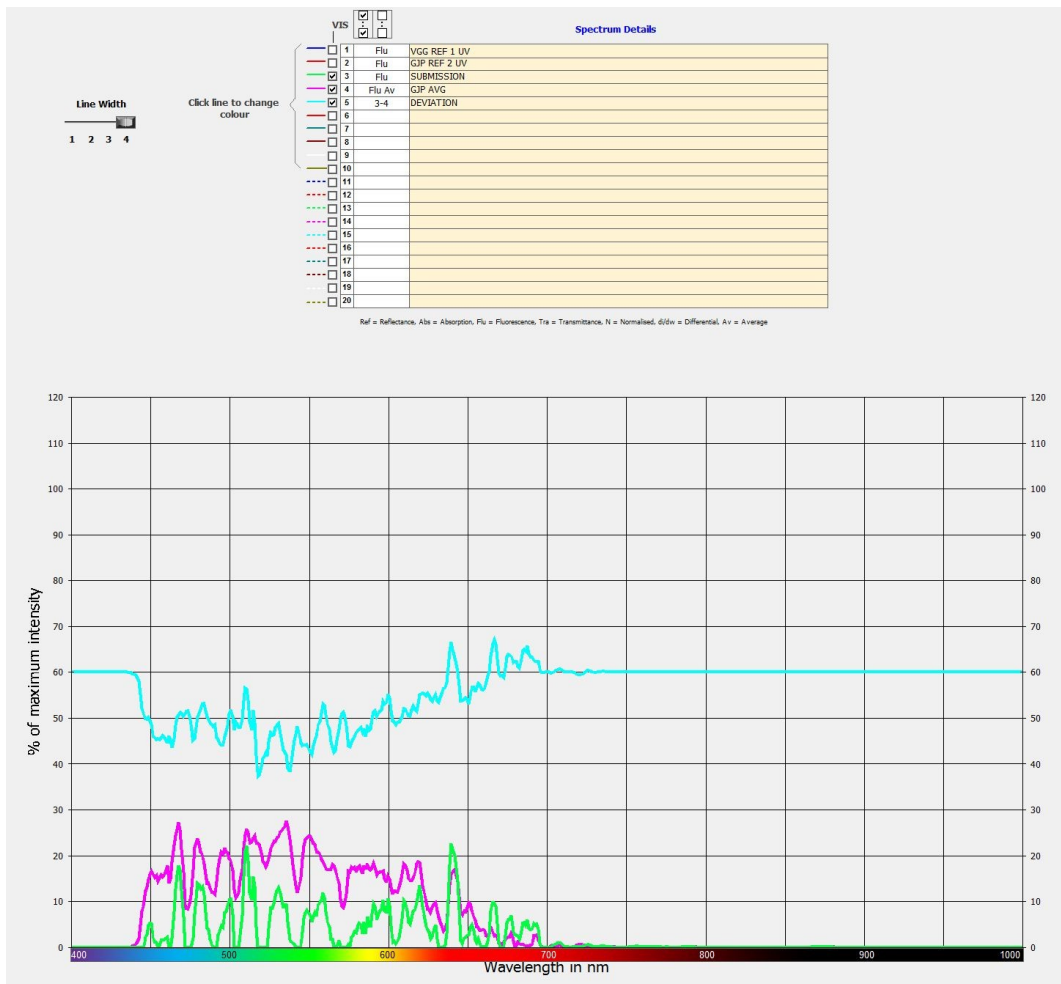
We have been advised by the American Philatelic Society that this certificate has now been withdrawn and that a statement will be published in *The American Philatelist* in an upcoming issue.

Hans Reiche on overprints from
THE ADMIRAL STAMPS of 1911 to 1925
Page 108

Varieties: In addition to varieties found on the 3 Cents *carmine* plates, a number of overprinting varieties exist on both types.

- “I” pairs exist with and without overprint.
- “I” forged overprints exist. The ink is different from the original.
- “I” broken s in word cents.
- “II” double overprint exists. One plate block of 8 from Plate 115 with double overprint exists.
- “II” double overprint and one inverted exist.
- “II” triple overprint exists.
- “II” forged overprints exist.

The Failed UV Spectrum Analysis



Conclusions

- The September 25, 2018 certificate #F5149 stating “Canada Scott No. 130b, mint, OG, block of 4, with fake 2 CENTS surcharge” was accurate at the time of issue and remains so.
- To this date there are no known genuine examples of this stamp.

Observations

- It is critical for Expertizing Committees to collaborate and talk among themselves
- The use of analytical methods for examining philatelic submissions is no longer an option
- Expertizers, be they individuals or committees must reach out beyond traditional resources to maintain a balance between expertizing experience and science.



**VINCENT GRAVES GREENE
PHILATELIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION**