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Collecting Plate Varieties

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To some collecting of plate varieties may mean flyspecks. This depends on the interpretation of what a plate variety is. All varieties that can be found on a plate and that are constant and repeat in exactly the same position should not be classified as flyspecks. Those that appear once and are not constant may be classified as flyspecks.

Constant plate varieties can form a nice specialized collection. Many can be found that are common and not expensive at all. But one needs patience, and maybe a good magnifying glass, even though most varieties can be found without difficulty.

What should one look for? Many of the constant plate varieties have a reason to be constant on a plate. The manufacturer designing a stamp must use certain layout guides that allow him to place each stamp subject to an exact position. Such layout guides may be in various forms. In addition, the manufacturer may have to make some correction to a layout or stamp subject to improve its image. These two facts produce the majority of plate varieties.

There are others that are not intentional and that leave some mark on the plate that has no relation to the actual design. These may have been overlooked by the manufacturer and were not removed prior to printing. Constant plate varieties may be divided into the following:

Guides: these may be dots or fine lines that were entered on a plate and that were not removed prior to printing. Guide dots can be found on many issues and these could be

located anywhere in the design. Guide lines usually can be found just outside the design, next to a frame. These may be horizontal or vertical lines.

Flaws: certain flaws are well known amongst Canadian stamps. For example the "Cockeyed King" with a mark in the right eye of the King. Or, another example is the so-called "Shilling Mark", a white mark between the numerals 1 and 3 on the 13 cents Yacht *Britannia* stamp. The flaw of the King stamp was noted and the manufacturer corrected it later on, but poorly.

Retouches: here the manufacturer may have corrected a feature of the design to overcome some weakness, by strengthening a line. Such corrections can be noted by often irregular lines or heavier lines than the original design. It takes a little experience to detect these retouches. Most retouches occur on early stamp issues, with the majority on the King George V Admirals.

Re-entries: if the manufacturer did not like how a certain stamp subject was transferred onto the plate, he may try one more transfer. The trick is to align exactly this transfer with the already transferred subject. Most of the time a slight change in transfer position will create a double impression of certain lines of the design. These are clear and sharp extra lines duplicating part of the design. If the entire design shows that all features of the design have been doubled, this would be called a "major re-entry" and a nice item to collect. One such major one is the 1 Cent green Admiral with the entire design doubled; worth today about \$1,000.00.