

An Uncommon U.S. Coil Stamp on a Canadian Cover

By Patrick Crosby

One aspect of collecting postal history on cards is collecting the various stamps that were in current use. What drew my attention to the featured postcard below was the U.S. coil stamp with widely separated perforations.



Next there was the Canadian stamp to the upper left. Finally, there was the Canadian slogan cancellation. I didn't much care about the view side, but it ended up being a necessary part of the story. Since the U.S. stamp itself catalogs at about \$25 used and on cover at about \$35, I thought \$3.75 was a good price.

First to talk about is the U.S. coil stamp with its gross $8\frac{1}{2}$ vertical perforation gauge. Until 1910 U.S. coil stamps were perforated 12 (12 perforating holes in the distance of 2 cm.). This was a standard gauge for all U.S. stamps, but the Bureau of Engraving and Printing had trouble with these unintentionally separating in their coiling machines and the vending and affixing machine manufacturers also found them too fragile. So, the Bureau switched to a perforation $8\frac{1}{2}$ and the complaints switched to the problem that they couldn't be separated easily without damage to the stamps. Then in 1914 a perforation 10 gauge was settled upon.

This postcard's U.S. stamp is Scott 412, one of four 1¢ and 2¢ coil stamps issued in 1912 perforated $8\frac{1}{2}$ (Sc. 410-413). Also, in 1912 imperforate 1¢ and 2¢ stamps of the same issue (Sc. 408-409) were printed in mass quantities for use by private companies manufacturing vending and affixing machines who prepared their own coils. These imperforate stamps have relatively low catalog values and so were later widely used to fraudulently create the much scarcer and higher value $8\frac{1}{2}$ perforation coil stamps. Caution is urged when buying these coil stamps, but that caution is mitigated when the stamps are on a contemporary cover.

My explanation of the travels of this postcard may not be accurate, but here goes. The sender was visiting Belle Isle, a large Detroit, Michigan city park that occupies an entire island in the Detroit River. The island is in the United States, but immediately to the south is Canada. The sender purchased the postcard at the park and the strong gripper indentations (across the forehead of Washington) indicate the stamp came

from a vending machine. The U.S. coil stamp was affixed, but the sender waited until returning home to London, Ontario, about 120 miles away, before writing the postcard.

Now the postcard needed a Canadian stamp for domestic delivery to Wyoming, Ontario, and a common 1¢ Canada Sc. 104 was slapped over the U.S. stamp. Notice that the U.S. stamp is tied to the postcard with portions of the slogan cancel on its left. The missing portion of the cancel is on the Canadian stamp. Perhaps the latter stamp was repositioned by a collector who wanted to highlight the uncommon U.S. coil stamp and save the Canadian stamp. The wavy bar machine slogan cancel is advertising well in advance for the upcoming annual (still today) “Western Fair / London / Canada / Sept. 11-19 / 1914”.



At Belle Isle new bridges on the Grand Canal have replaced the old ones like the one shown, but the charm remains. The park is now in a 30 years lease to the state of Michigan necessitated by the 2013 City of Detroit bankruptcy. Besides a beach and multiple onshore sports and other recreational facilities, the park includes an aquarium, botanical garden, nature center, golf course, and maritime museum. When I wrote an article for Post Boy about Millers, NV my wife and I visited the area for a closer look. So, she now suggested that we should visit beautiful Belle Isle in Michigan for this article. I declined.

Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal cards, especially used, including first days; the 1886 Grant Letter Card (or Sheet); UC16, the first U.S. aerogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.