

Canada's "unofficial" coins

Numismatic TALES

By George Manz

Before Canadian Confederation in 1867, the only "official" Canadian coins were the Province of Canada's decimal coins of 1858 and 1859. Those dated 1858 included bronze large cents, as well as silver five cents, 10 cents and 20 cents. Large bronze cents were also struck in 1859. But while both large cents were minted by the Royal Mint, they were struck on blanks produced by Ralph Heaton and Sons of Birmingham.

But the Heaton Mint produced other coinage for the Canadian provinces and colonies, both before and after Confederation. While the scope of this article is certainly not all encompassing, I hope to touch on many of the major coins and tokens that Heaton minted for use in Canada.

The Charlton Standard Catalogue of Canadian Colonial Tokens notes that the Quebec Bank half penny (un sou) and penny (deux sous) tokens of 1852 "were struck by Ralph Heaton and Co. from designs probably suggested by the Quebec Bank but it is unknown who cut the dies."

Meanwhile, the Bank of Upper Canada placed orders with the Royal Mint to produce half-penny and one penny bank tokens, which were struck in 1850 but didn't arrive in Canada until the following year.

But there weren't enough tokens to satisfy the needs of Upper Canada, so another order was placed in 1851. Some of the resulting 1852 half-penny and one penny tokens were minted by the Royal Mint. But James O. Sweeny, author of *A Numismatic History of the Birmingham Mint*, writes that production was delayed due to more important demands on the mint. "Only a portion had been completed by the time the ocean shipping season ended in August 1852," so the dies and blanks were shipped "to the Heaton Mint for comple-

tion of the order. This was done at the Heaton Mint in 1853, using the 1852 dated dies which were then returned to the Royal Mint and destroyed."

Charlton notes that the 1852 tokens with a medal alignment were minted at the Royal Mint, while those with a coinage alignment were minted at the Heaton Mint.

The Heaton Mint also produced other half-penny and penny tokens for the Bank of Upper Canada dated 1854 and 1857. Charlton writes that the design for these tokens was suggested by the Bank of Upper Canada and notes the dies were cut by John Pinches.

Other provinces also went to the Heaton Mint to produce coinage to satisfy their needs.

issue a coinage of copper pennies and halfpennies," Charlton writes. After receiving sanction from the proper authorities, the coinage was struck by Heaton and Co. from modified 1843 reverse dies and completely new obverse dies.

Charlton goes on to say the "dies were prepared by Leonard Charles Wyon, who used for the obverse the head punch of the contemporary English coinage.

"These head punches were of the attractive young [Victoria] head designed by William Wyon."

J.A. Haxby and R.C. Willey, in their book *Coins of Canada*, write "the word CURRENCY was used in place of TOKEN on the reverse. The use of CUR-



Haxby and Willey write that the half penny and penny tokens, which were dated 1856, "are popularly known as the Mayflower coppers because of their reverse design and are among the most beautiful of all the Canadian Colonial coppers. The master tools were engraved by Leonard C. Wyon, using his own design for the obverse and that of Halifax botanist John S. Thompson for the reverse."

Meanwhile, Charlton writes the two tokens "feature a sprig of mayflower, now the provincial flower." He goes on to state the tokens "were produced at Heaton's Mint in Birmingham (without the 'H' mint mark), but the master tools were made by the Royal Mint."

Because so many excellent books and articles have been written about Prince Edward Island's 1871 cent, this description will be brief. I'll begin by listing an article on the Prince Edward Island Numismatic Association web site: www.angelfire.com/art/peina under the heading "Featured Treasure." While the PEINA article on the history of PEI's only official coin is brief, it is a great place to start to find out about this important event in the province's history.

"The province of Prince Edward Island decided to adopt the Decimal Currency system from the Sterling in 1871," states the PEINA website. "The Royal Mint in London, England was contacted to contract for the coinage of the PEI cent. The Mint told the PEI Treasury that domestic requirements would be too great to leave time for the PEI contract before shipping closed the first of December. They suggested that a private firm be used. On September 13, 1871, the Royal Mint

in London, England contracted Messrs. Ralph Heaton and Sons of Birmingham, England to supply two million one cent coins by November 14, 1871."

The Currency and Medals of Prince Edward Island, by Graham, Kennedy and Becker et al, notes the Heaton firm wasn't the only company to bid on the contract. Heaton had to compete with James Watt and Co.

Haxby and Willey note the obverse was designed and engraved by L.C. Wyon, while the "reverse was adapted by L.C. Wyon from the Government seal of the island."

The PEI cent has several interesting features, including being the only coin issued for British North America to use the English word "QUEEN" instead of the Latin "Regina."

Another is this coin was minted without the standard "H" mint mark from the Heaton Mint.

While I have several inexpensive lower grade PEI cents in my collection, I have recently purchased a high grade condition-rare example: graded MS-65 Red by ICCS. Mint State examples in this or similar grades have a great deal of eye appeal and are very difficult to acquire. The ICCS Population Report - January 2001 notes that fewer than 80 examples have been graded or cross-graded as Mint State by the company.

After Confederation, the Dominion of Canada utilized the Heaton Mint as well. In 1871, the Dominion of Canada's order for silver coinage marked the first time the Heaton Mint had minted silver coins. Sweeny writes: "One thousand 50-cent pieces were struck on 18 December 1871 under close supervision by Royal Mint personnel."

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We will begin with New Brunswick. In 1843 the province of New Brunswick decided to order the minting of penny and half-penny tokens. "The Colonial Office," Charlton writes, "on being informed of the plan, was displeased and ordered the New Brunswick authorities to cease at once from proceeding with the proposed coinage."

So New Brunswick officials informed the Colonial Office that they had terminated their agreement, but secretly went ahead with their plans anyway. To make a long story short, Britain didn't find out about the 1843 New Brunswick half-penny and penny tokens until much later, in 1854.

"Under the provisions of the Currency Act of 1852, the government of New Brunswick in June 1853 sought permission to

CURRENCY indicated the official nature of the issue and also implied Halifax Currency, the standard at the time."

Richard W. Bird, in his excellent book *Coins of New Brunswick*, writes that 201 boxes of the copper currency arrived on board the ship *John Barbour* on December 18, 1854. He goes on to note the province's new Lieutenant-Governor, John Henry Thomas Manners-Sutton, "issued the Proclamation making the new copper currency legal on January 8, 1855."

Nova Scotia also needed small copper currency for its economy. While many semi-regal tokens had been struck for Nova Scotia from 1823 to 1843 without Britain's official sanction, the province didn't get its first official coinage until the 1850s.

Heatons...

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The special security measures included two night watchmen who fired a muzzle-loaded rifle at intervals during each night to let the Birmingham police know that all was well."

Sweeny goes on to write that after the initial Canadian order, "silver became commonplace at Heatons as more and more Colonial coinage orders were received. In fact, Heatons even received a contract in 1872 for silver blanks for use in the Royal Mint for Imperial and Colonial coinages."

The Heaton Mint produced many coins in various denominations for Canada during the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s and the early 1900s.

Not to be outdone, the government of Newfoundland contracted the Heaton Mint to mint a variety of coins for the island. While Heaton minted a large number of coins for Newfoundland, almost all of them had mintages of 100,000 coins or less.

But the rarest is the 1871H Newfoundland/Canadian 10 mule. Haxby and Willey note there are only two known examples. Brian Cornwell, in his *Canadian Coin News* article late last year, would rate this coin as "Excessively Rare" on his rarity scale.

But whether the coins you have with the famous H mint mark are common or rare, the coins and tokens minted at the Heaton Mint have fascinated collectors around the world for the last 150 years.

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