

# Collectors Club *Philatelist*

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Rarities  
of St. Pierre and Miquelon



# The Finest and Rarest Classics of St. Pierre and Miquelon Issued in the First Quarter of 1885

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## Introduction

St. Pierre and Miquelon, the first French colony, and the only French land in North America, saw the creation of its official Post office in 1854 (see 1854 cover below). Then, the first stamps of the general colonies – all the colonies had the same stamps – arrived in 1859 with the “Eagle” type.



The surcharges of “S P M” arrived in 1885. They were manual and were intended to change the value of the stamps to better correspond to different rates. Thus, the archipelago took on another dimension in its philatelic adventure.

At the time, the population was around only 4,000 or so inhabitants. Therefore, the number of emissions was very low. It is for this reason that some of those stamps have become extremely rare.

In addition, many people were illiterate and did not write. The covers of this period preserved intact are therefore extremely rare.

The first three months of 1885 are a gold mine for the philately of SPM. Most of the great rarities are there!

## Development

The first of the overprints was issued in January 1885. It is a 2c Lilac-brown/gray, an “Alphée Dubois” type, with the “5” and “SPM” overprints. The 5c stamp paid the local rate.



Figure 1.



Of the 115 pieces known (in any condition), only 23 are unused, and about half of those with gum (Figure 1). This stamp is a French colonies rarity.

But among the 23 unused examples identified, six are varieties. And, of these six varieties, two have become international rarities (Figures 2 and 3 – Ex Ferrari). *No cover bearing these stamps is known to date.*



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

In March 1885, the second issue was released with the "25" and "SPM" overprints on the 1f olive "Sage" type. This shows the flexibility of the administration of the time, which devalued 1f stamps to 25c. The 25c surcharge represented the rate to France.

Approximately 115 examples of this issue are known, but only 20 unused, half of them with gum (Figure 4).

Among the 20 unused stamps identified, seven are varieties. One of these varieties, with the double "SPM" overprint above the "25" surcharge, is the greatest variety of SPM and has become an international rarity as well (Figure 5). This stamp also has a very fresh appearance and wide margins.



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

Several different varieties are known in used condition but one of them stands out: the "25" surcharge is vertical but, most importantly, the "SPM" overprint was omitted (Figure 6); a very important rarity, too.

*As with the first issue, no cover is known to date bearing these stamps.*

At the same time, another type of "25," with gothic numbers, was also used on the 1f Sage (Figure 7). Slightly fewer than 150

pieces have been identified in unused and used condition, including the few varieties known.



Figure 7.



Unquestionably, the major piece that stands out is a used pair, one with the "25" inverted. In addition, it is the only known multiple for both types of surcharge "25" (Figure 8). This pair (Ex. Ferrari) is an important international rarity.

Only one cover is known with the type 2 overprint (Figure 8a). It was used in 1886 and is addressed to the stamp merchant Henry Hechler in Halifax (Canada). The stamp is used, along with other (later) issues of 1885. This



Figure 8.



Figure 8a. The only known cover bearing a type 2 overprint (enlarged).

cover, shown several times in articles by specialist Robert Stone, is a great rarity of the French colonies.

At the end of March 1885, a new 5c surcharge was programmed. The "5" chosen is different from the one used in

January, but is the same as the type 2 of the "25" of the previous issue. It surcharged the 4c lilac-brown/gray of the "Alphée Dubois" type (Figure 9). Just over 250



Figure 9.



copies have been recorded to date, including varieties.

The largest-known multiple of this issue is a used block of 4 (Figure 10).

Concerning this stamp, it is known on two covers. The first was presented earlier as Figure 8a, with the 25/1f type 2. The other is a very interesting registered cover to France, which presents in strip of three, along with the "SPM Gothic" type, issued a few months later in August (Figure 11). This, too, is a nice rarity of French colonies.

Then, my research of more than 20 years became formalized in 2017.

I've been studying "SPM" overprints since 1980 and, after long hours of studying the fourth issue, the 5/4c lilac-brown/gray, I discovered that there was another type of "5," authentic, and never reported by catalogs and dealers. It is quite possible that this stamp has been considered fake by some collectors, or even by a few experts.

More than 35 years of research have turned up only 10 examples, seven with a normal overprint, and three with reversed overprint. But of the seven normal stamps, only one is unused (Figure 12)! This means that – to date – only one complete collection of unused SPM stamps is possible. The experts Calves and Jacquart of Paris were the first to create a certificate for this new stamp (Figure 12a)!



Figure 10.



Figure 11.



Figure 12 (right).

Figure 12a (below).



Figure 13.



But the most important of my discoveries is the acquisition of two covers that have this famous “5” that remained unknown for more than a century.

Indeed, the first addressed by registered mail to France – with a superb header from “Cabinet du Gouverneur” – shows this stamp used with three issues of 1891 (Figure 13). And, on this stamp, the “P” of “S P M” is not printed.

The other registered cover, addressed to Austria (a very rare destination at this time), shows (firstly) a combination of interesting stamps “General colonies - SPM,” and (secondly) the presence of two examples of this “new” stamp (Figure 14).

To me, these two covers are probably the most beautiful of the 19th century, and are wonderful international rarities.



Figure 14.



A final point to emphasize: All examples with the normal typing have surcharges extremely fat and very inked. In addition, the letters "S P M" are closer to those of other programs.

On the other hand, the three-known reversed overprints show very clean strikes and letters "S P M" identical to the other issues (Figure 15). This confirms that this stamp was overprinted in two stages.



Figure 15.

## Conclusion

For a dozen years, all these great classics that came from the Ferrari, Dubus, Stone, Odlin and Pratt collections have been put together in a single collection to form the largest study of its kind. This study of 128 pages has been shown in some of the world's biggest competitions. (The exhibit was a candidate for the "Grand Prix d'Honneur" in 2017.)

Today, St. Pierre and Miquelon, the only French archipelago in North America, has become a popular area for philately and history around the world. It is the No. 1 French colony with the largest number of rarities.

## Author's publication

The author published his own catalog of all the classics of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon. The 2019-20 edition (with 128 color pages) gives information on the issues, the known pieces, the varieties, the cancellations and much more, including value. Those interested in either the book or corresponding with the author may contact him by email: [texspm@cheznoo.net](mailto:texspm@cheznoo.net).