Stamps

by Larry McInnis

There is great speculation in Britain that the famous definitive stamp, showing the cameo of Queen Elizabeth II done by Arnold Machin, will be replaced with a more recent portrait of the queen.

The first Machin definitives, as they are so lovingly known, were issued June 5, 1967.

The design is from a plaster cast by Machin that was made for coinage, and first used for Canadian coins.

As long-running as the Machin cameo is, it's nothing to the long use of a portrait of Queen Victoria done in 1837 by Alfred Edward Chalon, to be known forever as the Chalon portrait.

The most famous example of the Chalon portrait is Canada's most valuable stamp, the 12-pence black (Scott 3) issued June 14, 1851. It was used on the "six pence sterling" (Scott 9) issued July 1, 1857, the "six pence sterling — 12½ cent" (Scott 18) of 1859 and the famous June 19, 1897, (Scott 50-65) diamond jubilee issue.

The jubilee issue is noteworthy in that an older Queen Victoria is shown on it also, from a portrait by Heinrich von Angeli done in 1885 showing her as Empress of India, which she became in 1862. This vignette became the basic design of Canadian definitives from then to the end of her reign, just after the turn of the century.

"Chalon portrait" as applied to the 12-pence black is a misnomer.

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