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# Norway's Coarse Perforation Varieties of 1892-1893

(Norgeskatalogen Numbers 51 IV b vt1, 52 IV vt1, and 56B)

By Bjørn Kristian Wang

For many years, collectors of early Norwegian stamps have been aware of the existence of a few, very rare perforation varieties of 3-øre and 5-øre stamps produced by the Central Printing Works. Despite the collector knowledge of the existence of these stamps, virtually nothing substantive has ever come forth about the reason for the manufacture of these stamps.

This article is intended to try to make sense of the various published and unpublished theories, early speculative literature, printing and delivery data, and the stamps themselves. The perforations and the cancellations on the stamps provide clues to the origins of these enigmatic postage stamps.

## The Equipment

The first topic that needs to be addressed is the subject of which perforator was used to perforate these stamps. *Central Trykkeriets Produksjon Volume VIII of Håndbok Over Norges Frimerker* from 1988 states (page 5) that the error stamps of 1892, perforated  $13\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ , most likely were not made by the same perforator apparatus as the later, regular issue coarse perforation stamps made from December 1893 through 1897. This opinion apparently originated with Wiegand Hansen, who was on the committee working on the handbooks. Hansen had published this opinion in *Norges Filatelistisk Tidsskrift* (January 1986), reasoning that the error stamps do not exhibit the same distinctive variations as the later, regular issue, coarse perforation stamps (NK58B-NK72 and P6-P7). This opinion was later reversed in Volume VII of the Handbook in 1992 with the discussion in that volume about NK 52 IV. The original statements in Volume VIII and in Mr. Hansen's article are not correct. These early stamps do in fact exhibit the same perforation variations as the regular issue stamps.

All stamps made with the coarse-perforation perforator show characteristic markers that result from misplaced and bent perforation teeth. These characteristics can be used to determine which vertical row of the sheet a stamp was originally positioned in. Figure 1 shows an example of NK 52 IV vt1 with the same misplaced perforation hole that is commonly seen on the regular issue, coarse perforation stamps,



Figure 1. Rough perforated example of NK 52 IV vt1, stamp #8.



Figure 2. A comparison of perforation flaws between NK56B, NK64, and NK69 (auction lot, December 1999).

from vertical row 9 in the sheet. The fourth hole from the right at the top and bottom of the stamp is misplaced upward.

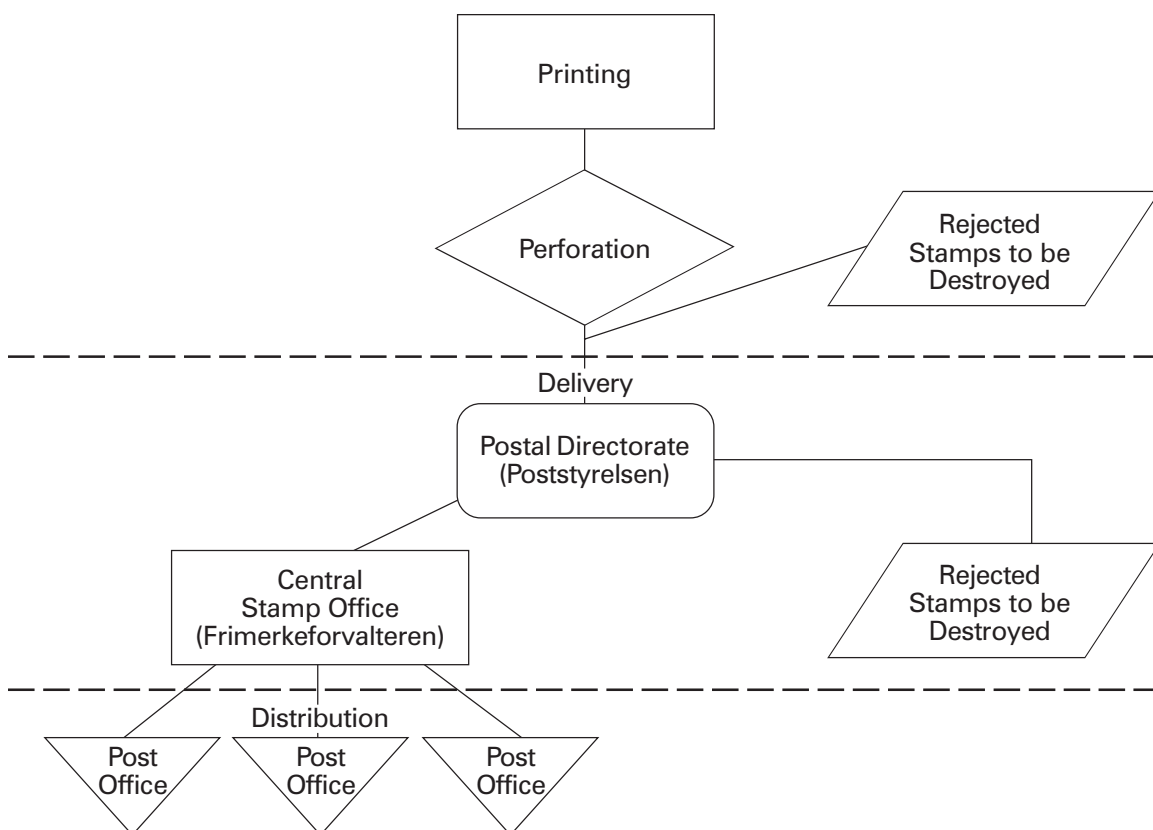
In reality all of the same perforation variations are present on these early stamps as they are on the later issues. The only real difference is the degree to which they exhibit these flaws. These variations became more pronounced as time went along. An example of NK56B is shown in Figure 2

along with a later version of the same perforation flaw on NK64. In addition, an example of NK69 is shown with the final evolution of this flaw. All of these stamps are from vertical row 10 in the sheet. The final version of this flaw is listed as Perforation Variation number 2 in Norgeskatalogen.

In general, stamps made from this perforator are of less than perfect quality. The distance between the holes made it very difficult to tear the stamps apart. The result is that many coarse-perforated stamps have short or missing perforations. This may have been a contributing cause to the short time of use for this perforator.

With the resolution of the issue of which perforator was used, we need to look at the perforator equipment itself. Jørgen Sjønnung, in an article in *Norsk Filatelistisk Tidsskrift* (10/91), gives a detailed description of the design and the operation of the perforation machine, as well as diagrams of how this machine was used. This article is recommended for anyone interested in the perforation process of early Norwegian stamps. This description is invaluable in gaining an understanding of how Norwegian stamps in general were perforated from 1863 through 1910. The most important piece of information we learn from Sjønnung's research is that the coarse perforation "comb" has a manufacturers' marking that designates when the apparatus was made, as well as who made it. Stamped into the metal is: X.2=92N. The N stands for Nordby, an instrument maker in Christiania. The manufacture date of this instrument is Sunday, October 2, 1892 (X-2-92). The delivery of this perforator to the postal authorities and the printer would have taken place soon after its manufacture.

Now that the machinery portion of the scenario has been set, we need to look at these rare stamps to determine when they were made and why. Neither of these issues is easily resolved. Most of the information presented here is based on the facts surrounding the printing and usage of these stamps. Additional information and conclusions have been necessarily extrapolated from the available data.



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## The Process

To help understand many of the terms I have used, and to explain the process of how the stamps made their way from the printer to the post offices, I devised a flowchart to help understand the distribution of the stamps.

It is my assertion that these variety stamps were perforated and delivered on two separate occasions. The first group is apparently directly related to the manufacture and delivery of the new perforator, while the reason for the existence of the second group is much less clear. Each group will be discussed separately. This assertion goes against previous theories that there were multiple (at least three) emergency usages of the coarse perforation machine.



Figure 3. Mint stamp #1 of NK 52 IV vt1 (auction lot, November 2001).

### Epoch One, October 1892 (NK 52 IV vt 1)

Within a few days of Nordby making the new perforator, this apparatus would have been delivered to the Central Printing Works. It seems logical that the government officials who had ordered this part, as well as officials at the contracted printing agency, would want to test the new perforator to make sure it adequately met their needs.

According to information provided in Volumes II and VII of the handbooks, NK 52 plate IV was printed from October 1-21, 1892. Of the original contract for 7,000,000 stamps, only 6,800,000 were printed, and only 6,685,000 were approved for use.

Using the information and diagrams provided by Sjønnung in his 10/91 article, it appears that it would have been relatively easy for the operator of the perforation machine to replace the old perforation apparatus with the brand new part. These perforator combs were designed to fit onto the same machine and to be interchangeable. The operator could then run through a few sheets for the management and/or officials to examine and approve or disapprove. It is not known what level or form of approval was required.

The new perforator comb likely would have been delivered sometime between October 3-5, the Monday through Wednesday of that week. Printing of stamps, which had started on Saturday, October 1, had stopped and did not resume until Thursday, October 6. The resumption of printing on October 6 provides the likely day for the test usage of the new equipment at the printing office.

Referring to Figure 1, we see a phenomenon that is quite common on some series of later Norwegian stamps. “Flisetagging,” as it is called in Norwegian, is an incomplete perforation that results in a stamp appearing as if it has been perforated by a needle rather than a full-sized perforation peg. This makes the stamps very difficult to tear apart.



Figure 4. First day cancellation on NK 52 IV vt1, Stamp #2 (auction lot, October 2002).

This is the only example of this phenomenon that I have seen on one of these variety stamps. The common cause of this problem was simply trying to perforate too many sheets at one time in the perforation machine. Could this have been an issue of the machine operator not being familiar with the new apparatus, and placing a couple too many sheets of stamps in the machine? Is it possible that the new perforator was not able to accommodate as many sheets of stamps as the older apparatus?

The total issue of NK52 IV was delivered to the central stamp office between October 13, 1892 and September 22, 1893. The largest delivery of stamps occurred on March 3, 1893 when a total of 14,500 sheets were delivered from the postal directorate.

The coarse-perforated 5-øre stamps first show up in early April of 1893. The earliest known cancellation of this stamp is from Christiania on April 7 as



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shown in Figure 4. Based on the cancellation data, it is my opinion that the variety perforation stamps were released as a small portion of the March 3 delivery. More than 50 percent of all dateable examples of NK 52 IV, perforated 13½ x 12½, are used during April and May of 1893 in Christiania. A smaller number of stamps are known used during the autumn and early winter months of 1893. Stamps from the second group are used in both Christiania and in Fredrikstad. Additionally one specimen is known used in Christiania in June of 1895. This is most likely the case of a stamp being used after laying around for a couple of years, unused, after being purchased. Chart 1 (following) is a listing of known cancellation dates and locations.

NK 52 IV was listed in *Norgeskatalogen* for many years as having two main color groups: grass-green and olive-green. Jørgen Sjønnung, in another article (*NFT*, 5/91) discussed three main color groups: grass-green, olive-green, and gray-green. In more recent years the color designations for this plate have been narrowed to a single, all-inclusive color designation in *Norgeskatalogen*. The 2002 edition gives a designation of green to olive-green, but then a smaller notation is made after the main listing saying that the color ranges from fresh-green to dull-yellowish-green. In my own research, I have found a total of four color shades or groups, all of which occur on both the regular stamps as well as the coarse-perforated varieties. They are: grass-green, olive-green, gray-green and a color similar to the olive-green but with a little more yellow in the mix. The colors seem to have been mixed randomly throughout the delivery. None of the colors correspond to a certain usage time or place. By far the most commonly seen colors are the olive-green and yellowish olive-green shades. The gray-green and grass green shades are scarcer with the gray-green being the least common.

The coarse-perforated 5-øre stamps occur in all four horizontal watermark positions, according to the 1992 handbook. The rarity of the various positions is not known, but I have verified positions 1, 2, and 3.

Sjønnung's article in May 1991 was oriented around extra engraving types of the small number in the stamp design. One of the known examples of the coarse-perforated 5-øre stamps exhibits what Sjønnung designated as Type 2. The variation is listed as re-engraving O1 of Fellingstype 1 in the 1992 handbook. The coarse-perforated example of this variety is listed in Chart 1 as stamp #14 cancelled April 21, 1893. This stamp was sold in a joint auction of Samler Børsen and Frimerke Børsen on September 30, 1995.

Based on the information published in *Norgeskatalogen* 1986/87 by Georg Størmer, we learn that he knew of 48 used and 4 mint examples. Through my own research, and the assistance of other researchers, I have been able to trace 96 used and between 2 and 4 mint examples. In my estimation, the total number of extant specimens of NK 52 IV vt1 is probably in all reality between 120 and 140 examples. The 2003 *Norgeskatalogen* states a known total of 68 examples.

Chart 1 is an overview of the various specimens known to me at this time. Usage date and location have been included along with notes about condition, provenance, or other useful information about the stamp. A number of stamps only show partial information due to lack of available photographs. A small number of duplicate examples may result from these listings as they are clarified.



## Chart 1. Known examples of NK 52 IV vt1

#	USAGE DATE	CANCELLATION	NOTES
1*	Mint	None	Kjell Germeten Auction 12/5/98 Lot 1467. Moldenhauer Auction 11/17/01 Lot 2209. Figure 3. Folded across lower part of stamp.
2*	Mint	None	Exhibited at Norwex '97.
3*	Mint	None	
4*	Mint	None	
1	7-IV-93	Kristiania	
2	7-IV-93	Kristiania	Exceptional example. Figure 4.
3	7-IV-93		
4	10-IV-93	Christiania	From vertical row 2 in the sheet. Stamp is damaged.
5	12-IV-93	Kristiania	
6	14-IV-93	Christiania	
7	14-IV-93	Kristiania	
8	17-IV-93	Christiania	Variation missing dot after POSTFRIM. Figure 1. From vertical row 9 in the sheet. Handbook Ft. 1 Var. 6
9	17-IV-93	Kristiania	
10	18-IV-93	Christiania	
11	18-IV-93	Kristiania	
12	20-IV-93	Kristiania	
13	20-IV-93	Kristiania	
14	21-IV-93	Kristiania	Sjønnung Type 2. Handbook Ft.4 Oppgraving 1 From vertical row 6 in the sheet.
15	21-IV-93	Christiania	
16	22-IV-93	Kristiania	
17	22-IV-93	Kristiania	
18	24-IV-93	Kristiania	
19	24-IV-93	Kristiania	A possible third unlisted example bearing this cancel could be the discovery example owned by Bøgh.
20	24-IV-93	Christiania	This may also be the Bøgh example.
21	24-IV-93	Bureau Reexpediente de Christiania	
22	25-IV-93	Kristiania	
23	25-IV-93	Kristiania	
24	26-IV-93	Kristiania	
25	27-IV-93	Kristiania	
26-27	27-IV-93	Christiania	Only known attached multiple. Resides in the Norwegian Postal Museum.
28-29	27-IV-93	Kristiania	2 singles on cover. Only known cover with multiple examples. Figure 5.
30	29-IV-93	Kristiania	
31	29-IV-93	Kristiania	
32	29-IV-93	Christiania	One ring cancel.
33	??-IV-93	Kristiania	
34	??-IV-93	Christiania	
35	??-IV-93	Christiania	
36	??-IV-93	Bureau Reexpediente de Christiania	
37	??-4-93	Kristiania Tur	See # 38.
38	??-4-93	Kristiania Tur	Yes, there really are 2 different examples with the same unreadable date with the same cancel type.
39	1-V-1893	Kristiania	Poor quality. From vertical row 1 in the sheet.
40	3-V-93	Kristiania	
41	12-V-93	Kristiania	



42	??-V-93	Kristiania	
43	24-V?-93	Kristiania	
44	30-V-93	Christiania	Sold in 1994 as damaged. Sold in 2000 as "nice." Stamp has been repaired. Figure 6.
45	??-5-93	Kristiania (Tur?)	
46	1-VI-95	Kristiania	
47	6-VI-93	Christiania	3 folded and damaged corners.
48	15-VI-93	Kristiania	
49	21-VI-93	Christiania G	
50	23-VI-93	Kristiania	
51	5?-VI-93	Christiania	One Ring Rubber cancel. Stamp is quite off center.
52	??-VI-93	Christiania	
53	17-VII-93	Christiania	One Ring Rubber cancel.
54	??-VII-93	Kristiania	
55	6-IX-93	Fredrikstad	On postal card to Bavaria.
56	10-IX-93	Fredrikstad	
57	21-IX-93	Kristiania	Olive Green.
58	??-IX-93	Fredrikstad	
59	24-IX-93	Christiania	
60	30-IX-93	Kristiania	
61	30-IX-93	Kristiania	
62	30-IX-93	Christiania	Missing lower left corner.
63	??-IX-93	Fredrikstad	
64	1-X-93	Kristiania	Missing several perforations on right side of stamp.
65	3-X-93	Kristiania	
66	10-X-93	Fredrikstad	
67	12-X-93	Fredrikstad	Watermark Position 2
68	14-X-93	Kristiania	
69	14-X-93	Fredrikstad	
70	14-X-93	Fredrikstad	
71	16-X-93	Fredrikstad	
72	21-X-93	Fredrikstad	Missing upper right corner and several perfs on right side. From vertical row 9 in the sheet.
73	25-X-93	Kristiania	This and next stamp were once sold as a pair, later split apart.
74	25-X-93	Kristiania	This and previous stamp were once sold as a pair, later split apart.
75	??-X-93	Fredrikstad	
76	??-X-93	Kristiania	
77	??-10-1893	Rygge	1 ring cancel. Information taken from poor photo. Dano 1/95 Lot 639.
78	21-XI-??	Unknown	
79	30-XI-93	Kristiania	Minor damage on left side of stamp.
80	12-XII-93	Christiania	
81	18-XII-93	Fredrikstad	
82	??- ??-93	Kristiania	Frettingham sale 1958. Cannot read cancel date in photo.
83	-93	Christiania	
84	-93	Kristiania	
85	Unknown	Fredrikstad	
86	Unknown	Fredrikstad	
87	Unknown	Christiania	
88	Unknown	Christiania	
89	Unknown	Kristiania	
90	Unknown	Kristiania	
91	Unknown	Unknown	Dano Auction group lot 672 9/10/99. "Rounded Corner." No photo available.



92	Unknown	Unknown	Oslo Frimerke og Myntsenter Auction group Lot 114 9/7/94, "Small Fault." No photo available.
93	Unknown	Unknown	Vestauksjon 2/14/82
94	Unknown	Unknown	Germeten sales list October 1985.
95	Unknown	Unknown	Weak cancel on a stamp with a plate flaw above the mouthpiece.
96	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown one ring cancel, possibly Rygge.

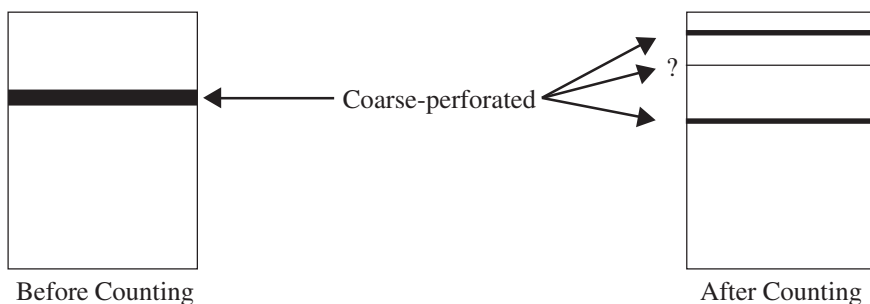
It is interesting to note that NK 52 IV vt1 is known cancelled in only three different locations: Christiania/Kristiania, Fredrikstad, and Rygge. The much rarer NK56B (discussed later) is known to have been used in more locations. Only one stamp is known used in Rygge (Stamp #77.) This stamp was likely purchased in Fredrikstad by someone who was traveling and used on mail sent from Rygge. The alternative is that a piece of mail was sent to Rygge containing a reply card or envelope that was franked with this stamp.

### Linking Cancels to Distribution

Matching the cancellation to a calendar from 1893 yields interesting additional facts. April 7 was a Friday and could likely have been the day that the stamps were delivered to the Christiania office. April 10 is the next Monday and it makes sense that few if any of these stamps were sold to be used during the weekend. Fully 50 percent of the used stamps listed were cancelled during the five-week period from April 7 to May 12, 1893. Apparently, most of the variety stamps originally produced went into the initial delivery made to the Christiania post office in early April 1893.

How did these stamps end up being used in two different places during distinctly different time frames? I think I have an answer that will logically explain the majority of the used specimens of these stamps.

I believe that all of the coarse-perforated 5-øre stamps started out in the same "stack" at the Central Printing Works. During one of the various counting or sorting operations, the sheets of coarse-perforated stamps were separated into at least two separate groups. This could have happened at any one of the places where the stamps were counted before being sent to the post offices for use.



The largest group, which was sent out in early April 1893, was sent exclusively to the Christiania post office. The second group, which was apparently smaller, was split with some stamps again going to Christiania in September 1893, and the rest going to Fredrikstad in October 1893. A possible very small third group (a few sheets only) could have been sent to Christiania in mid-June 1893. It is possible that the few random stamps used in late May through July, and again in December are simply stamps that were used after having been purchased at the post office during previous weeks.

Justus Anderssen and Henrik Dethloff, writing in *Norges Frimerker* in 1924, attributed the discovery of the 5-øre coarse-perforated stamp to Olaf Bøgh of Copenhagen sometime before 1914. By 1924, several additional examples had been identified. I have records of auction sales of this variation dating to 1958, when an example sold in a Robson-Lowe auction in London for £22. An example was also offered for sale by Frimerkesentralen in 1942.

To date NK52 IV vt1 is the only coarse- perforation variation stamp that is known in mint condition. It is very apparent that no effort was made to save these in preference to any other stamps at the time. Four lucky specimens somehow evaded being used during the mid-1890s and have survived to this day. I

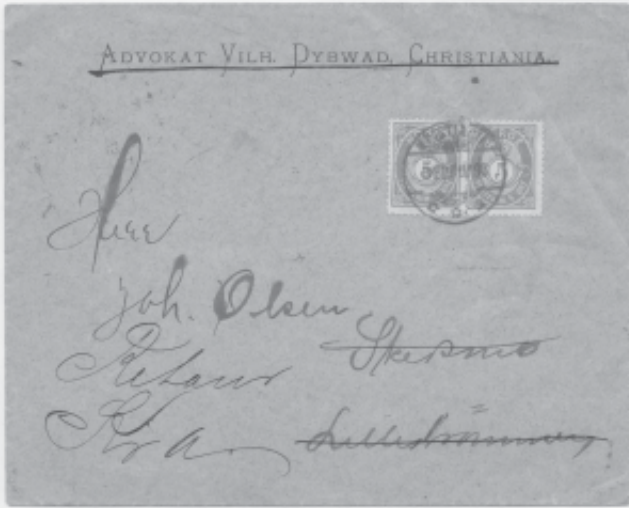


Figure 5. Cover with two examples of NK 52 IV vt1 (Stamps #18-19).

and cancelled in Christiania on 30-V-93 has an interesting recent past. I first noted this stamp when it was offered in a 1994 sales catalog for NOK 1,350. The description, along with a photograph of the stamp, made it clear that the perforations at the bottom right corner had been trimmed. The stamp then became available in a dealer's stock in 1996 as a trimmed stamp. More recently, the stamp was offered in a 2000 auction and described as having good perforations for the issue. In the newer photo of the stamp, shown here as Figure 6, the stamp is no longer trimmed. Sometime between 1996 and 2000, someone had added perforations to the stamp. They did a marvelous job, but it still is a repaired stamp. The moral is (as always): Buyer Beware! There are many forms of dubious stamps on the market. ■

*(To be continued in The Posthorn with Epoch Two.)*

I believe that the only reason that these survived over examples of the other variety stamps is that they are somewhat more common than either of the 3-øre varieties. This does not mean that the 5-øre stamps are common. In fact they are quite rare in their own right. They are simply less rare than the others.

This is also the only coarse-perforated stamp known to exist on cover. The cover shown here (Figure 5) has two examples on it. The cover was sent from Kristiania to Skedsmo in Lillestrøm on April 27, 1893 and was returned on May 3 due to the addressee having "moved to an unknown location." An additional example (listed as stamp #55) is known on a postal card sent to Bavaria from Fredrikstad.

The stamp listed as stamp #44



Figure 6. Repaired example of NK 52 IV vt1, Stamp #44 (auction lot, December 2000).