

THE PRINTING PROCESS, PART I

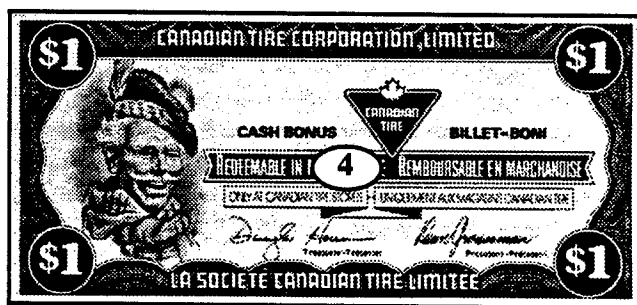
by Don Bradt

The process of printing Canadian Tire coupons is quite complicated and there is a lot of scope for things to go wrong. A concise description of the print sequence for gas coupons is given near the beginning of both editions of "The Charlton Standard Catalogue of Canadian Tire Cash Bonus Coupons" by Ross Irwin.

All gas coupons except those in the 1¢ to 4¢ range were printed by the British American Banknote Company (BABN) on Gladstone Street here in Ottawa. Ross Irwin describes a two pass printing process for these BABN gas coupons. Initially the design is printed on the face side in black and the serial number in red. The second pass adds the background colour and the denomination. Some details of the printing process can be deduced by looking at the various print errors that escape detection by the banknote companies. **Figure 1** shows a coupon with the design and serial number but both the background colour and the denomination (25) are missing. **Figure 2** depicts a coupon that went through both passes, but the background colour and the coupon's value are offset by about half an inch. These "offset" gas bar coupons are not that rare. Figures 1 and 2 correspond to the two illustrations shown by Ross Irwin. **Figure 3** shows a coupon that also went through the two passes, but seems to have skipped the portion that added the denomination. Unfortunately, a diligent CTC employee wrote the value in with a ballpoint pen. I would guess from these three coupons that the gas coupons were printed in at least three passes. I think the back of gas coupons would take an additional pass.

The Canadian Banknote Company (CBN) on Richmond Road in Ottawa printed series S4-S9 and S12-S17 store coupons. CBN is also not immune to these print problems. **Figure 4** shows an S13-E coupon with the background colour and background design missing. This doesn't show up that well in black and white, but if you compare it to a normal coupon you can see that the design is missing.

I recently found a current series S17-D coupon that had a bad crease in the paper. When the crease is straightened out, the printing of the entire coupon is normal, but the serial number has a space within it. In fact there is a hole cut right through the coupon when the serial number was stamped over the crease. I would surmise from this coupon (see **Figure 5**) that the serial number is added later for this series of coupons. In all five examples, the side of the coupon not shown is normal in every way.



THE PRINTING PROCESS, ...cont'd

Any of you who have looked through any quantity of new bundles of coupons have seen what I call "shifted serial numbers". This happens when successive sheets are shifted slightly as serial numbers are stamped on them. When you look through a lot of consecutively numbered bundles you notice that serial numbers 500 apart are shifted in each bundle. This shows that the serial numbers are added on sheets of coupons before they are cut and that the sheets are cut in batches of 500.

This cutting in batches of 500 sheets is quite obvious when you see bundles of 50¢, \$1 and \$2 coupons. These coupons are packaged in bundles of 200 and for the bundle starting with serial number nnnnnnn400, you can see the discontinuity between 499 and 500. The lower denominations are packaged in bundles of 500 so you have to combine consecutive bundles to see the same effect.

Five hundred sheets of coupons weighs about forty pounds and is probably awkward to move. This may explain why there seems to be more problems with serial numbers ending in 499 and 999, which are on the very bottom of the stack. I have found coupons ending in 999 that I think are part of an entire sheet replacement. The serial numbers have a different density and spacing than all the other coupons in the bundle. It is also obvious that this sheet was cut along with the other sheets comprising the bundle. I have a number of examples in my collection of what I think of as a "sheet replacement" but the one that illustrates the point best are two coupons ending in 200 shown in Figure 6. You can see that the "200" coupons have a much wider spacing and bolder numerals than the two intervening coupons. I would have had the coupons following the coupon 0009514200 too but the gas bar handed them out to customers while I was standing in line.

Figure 7 shows an \$17 coupon with no serial number. I believe that there are several hundred of these around. The last one I found was in a new bundle (of 500). It was an extra coupon between two consecutive serial numbers. Since the serial numbers are put on before they are cut, there should be 39 others associated with this one. I believe CBN randomly checks for this happening because I've noticed counting machine smudges on some new coupons just removed from the plastic wrappers.

Figure 8 shows an example of the face offset from the back of the coupon. The face of the coupon is shifted about half an inch to the left compared to the back. There is no way to cut this sheet of coupons without having one side or the other incorrect. In this case that back of the coupon is normal and the face is in two pieces. This shows that the face and back of these coupons are printed separately. Figure 9 is just a bad cut. The back is shifted slightly and the coupons could have been cut correctly.

Figure 10 shows a coupon that has the grey background and black printing offset from the red colour of the 10¢ coupon. The coupon shown has serial number 0022500070. I also have coupons 0022501070 and 0022505070 that have the same problem, so that the problem probably affects the other 37 coupons on the sheet. This sheet was also badly cut going by the red design but would have been a normal coupon measuring from the black printing. This suggests that the black printing is done first.

In all ten examples, the side of the coupon not shown is normal in every way.

