



1970 Christmas:



A Flyspecker's Paradise

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2020 marks the Golden Anniversary of the Children's crayon and brush creations reproduced on twelve Christmas stamps issued by the Canada Post Office on October 7, 1970.

PS-14 STAMP ANNOUNCEMENT BROCHURE

Canada Post's PS-14 brochure notes:

The meaning of Christmas to the under thirteen-year-old children of Canada has been captured in the representative group of twelve delightful drawings chosen from tens of thousands of submissions in the Canada Post Office stamp design project. The designation of 1970 as International Education Year places an added significance on the use of children's designs on Canada's Christmas stamps.

It was in mid-November 1969 that this venture was announced. The timing was a happy choice since it made possible an expression of "What Christmas Means to Me" based on actual experiences and happenings during the season which holds a special magic for the young. The cooperation of Departments of Education throughout Canada lightened the administrative burden; similarly the willing assistance of art gallery directors and other educators smoothed the path in the preliminary selection of designs.

The stamp issue was immediately popular with collectors because of the unique pane layouts of the 5¢ and 6¢ denominated stamps. Various plate varieties were reported as early as the May/June 1971 *Canadian Philatelist* by Ken Pugh. In that issue he listed some 25 constant varieties on just the 6¢ Church design.

Not much more was published on these stamps until the January 2016 issue of *Philabec*, journal of the Association des numismates et des philatélistes de Boucherville inc. Author André Dumont illustrated and described some 167 constant varieties on the 5¢ Santa Claus. Subsequent articles covered each of the twelve stamp designs. All of these articles are available for free download at philabec.com.

SHEET LAYOUTS

I had the opportunity to view press sheet material of the 1970 Christmas stamps at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) on October 1, 2009. At the time I was more interested in the layout of the panes than a detailed study of the various constant varieties. I had hoped to one day return to Ottawa and spend more time checking the press sheets (still in the plans!).

Illustrated below are digital recreations of the press sheets observed that contain the 5¢ and 6¢ denominations. Surprisingly, there was one sheet that contained four 5¢ panes and one sheet that contained two 6¢ panes placed above two 5¢ panes. A four-pane 6¢ layout was not observed; it may or may not exist.

The tagged stamps (see below) were printed from the combination sheet.

Not included here are varieties found on the 10¢ and 15¢ denominations; each had their own press sheet of six panes of fifty stamps, as illustrated at the end.

RIBBED; TAGGED

All twelve Christmas stamps were issued untagged and Winnipeg-tagged. The 5¢ stamps had a single bar placed down the middle of the stamps while all other denominations had tag bars placed down the vertical column of perforations which result in "two-bar" tagged stamps (a half-bar on each side of the stamp).

All 5¢ and 6¢ tagged stamps are only known on vertically ribbed paper (most noticeable from the back). The untagged stamps (5¢ and 6¢ values) exist on smooth or ribbed paper.

The tagging and ribbing thus add to the number of possible varieties to collect!

As first reported by Leopold Beaudet, the 5¢/6¢ combination press sheet used for the Winnipeg tagged stamps results in a very interesting tagging anomaly in the selvage of some of these panes.

As noted earlier, the tagging is in the middle on the 5¢ stamps and along the sides on the 6¢. With two different types of tagging applied to the same press sheet, what happens in the gutter between the 5¢ and 6¢ panes?

The illustration below shows a lower right corner block of 10 from the tagged 6¢ denomination (the tagging has been enhanced in the image). Notice that there is a 1 mm "snippet" of one-bar tagging at the bottom of the selvage of each column. This must have come from the 5¢ stamps. This slightly miscut block shows that there was a 4 mm vertical gap between the tag bars on the upper and lower panes.

This variety (two different types of tagging on the same selvage/block) will only occur if there is a vertical shift in the trimming between the panes.

8mm bars



4mm bars

VARIETIES

Due to the different constant plate varieties that have been reported, each of the panes on the press sheets is different in some way. One must either study the plate material at the Archives or obtain examples of each of the different panes.

In anticipation of writing this article on the 50th anniversary of this set of stamps, I had hoped to request detailed scans from LAC this summer to study. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has closed that part of LAC for the time being. Thus, the so-called “Plan B” was implemented — I made requests to a number of collectors for scans of full panes. Several scans have come forth (a total of 8 of each of the 5¢ and 6¢ untagged; 5 of each of the 5¢ and 6¢ tagged) but I am pretty sure I am still missing some examples.

I suspect that some varieties appeared throughout the printing process due to changes made in plates. Consider also that two types of untagged panes were released: philatelic stock (with inscriptions) and field stock (with the inscriptions trimmed off). Since most collectors would have been looking for philatelic stock, more examples of field-stock panes may yield additional information for us “flyspeckers”.

Careful study of the *Philabec* articles and comparing those findings with the scans at my disposal have resulted in the composite illustrations that follow, which show *significant* plate varieties of each 5¢ and 6¢ design. Those that are ‘larger’ and more ‘notable’ due to either their size, colour or location are presented; many of these should likely be listed in the *Unitrade* catalogue.

I also studied approximately 6,000 used copies in my own collection to find the varieties listed in *Philabec* and others subsequently found on the scanned panes. Additional constant varieties (with two or more examples) have also been discovered via these used specimens.

This study is, unfortunately (for the 50th anniversary), not quite complete.

If you are looking to ‘plate’ a single stamp, you will need to consult the hundreds of minuscule dots that are illustrated and documented in the *Philabec* articles.

Colour mis-registrations (i.e. colour shifts) are not considered as they are not constant in nature.

MORE SCANS REQUIRED

Further study is required to “plate” additional known varieties. Anyone having full panes of any of the 5¢ through 15¢ 1970 Christmas stamps is asked to contact the author (rharis@adminware.ca) to help aid in completing this study. 600dpi scans will be requested.

With your help we can find examples of every pane position and ultimately identify the pane and plate position of yet-unknown varieties.

An updated article will appear on The Royal Philatelic Society website (rpssc.org) as this project evolves.

Thank You!

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Other notable researchers of these stamps:

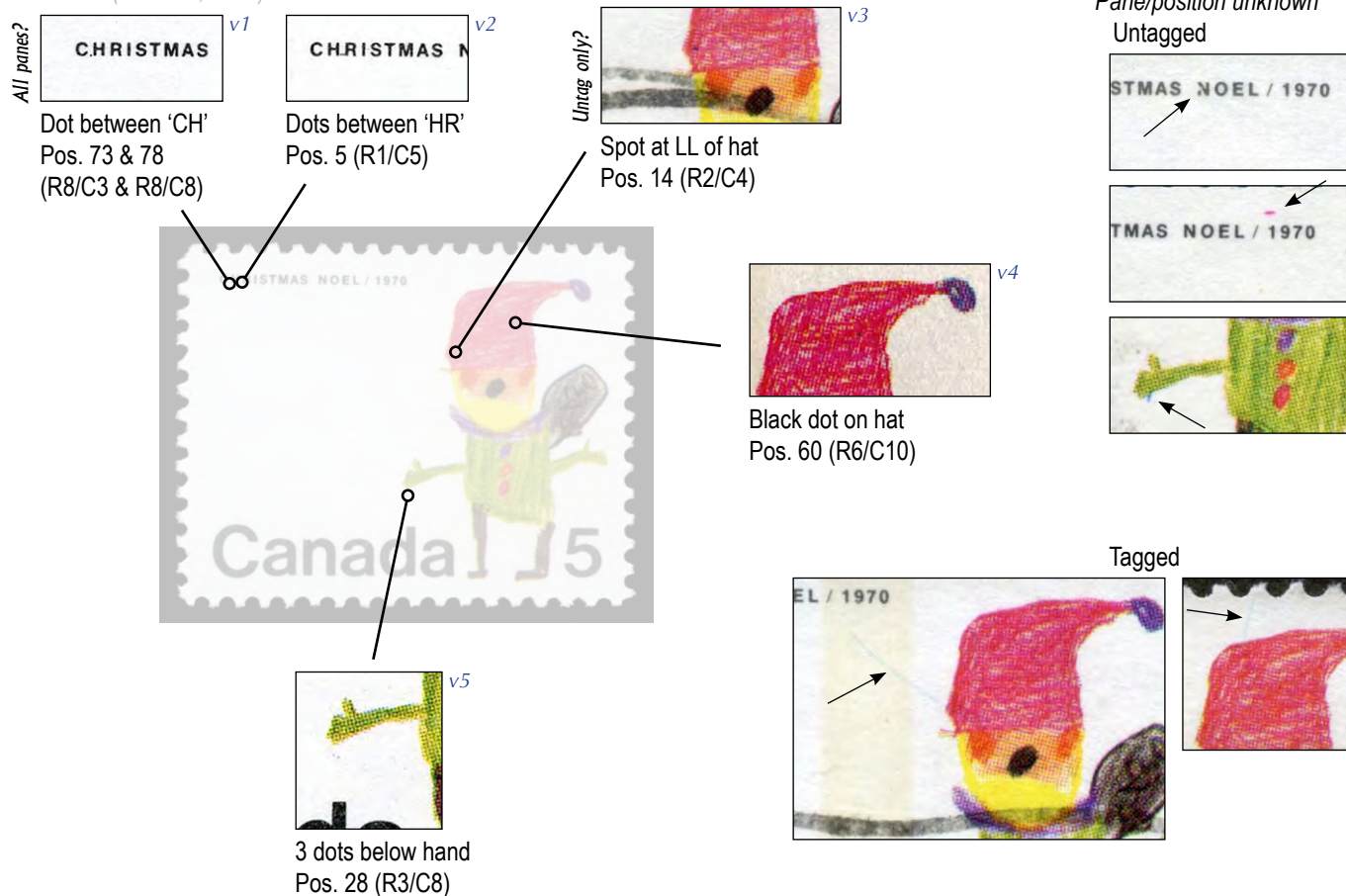
Amoz Chernoff

Bill Robertson



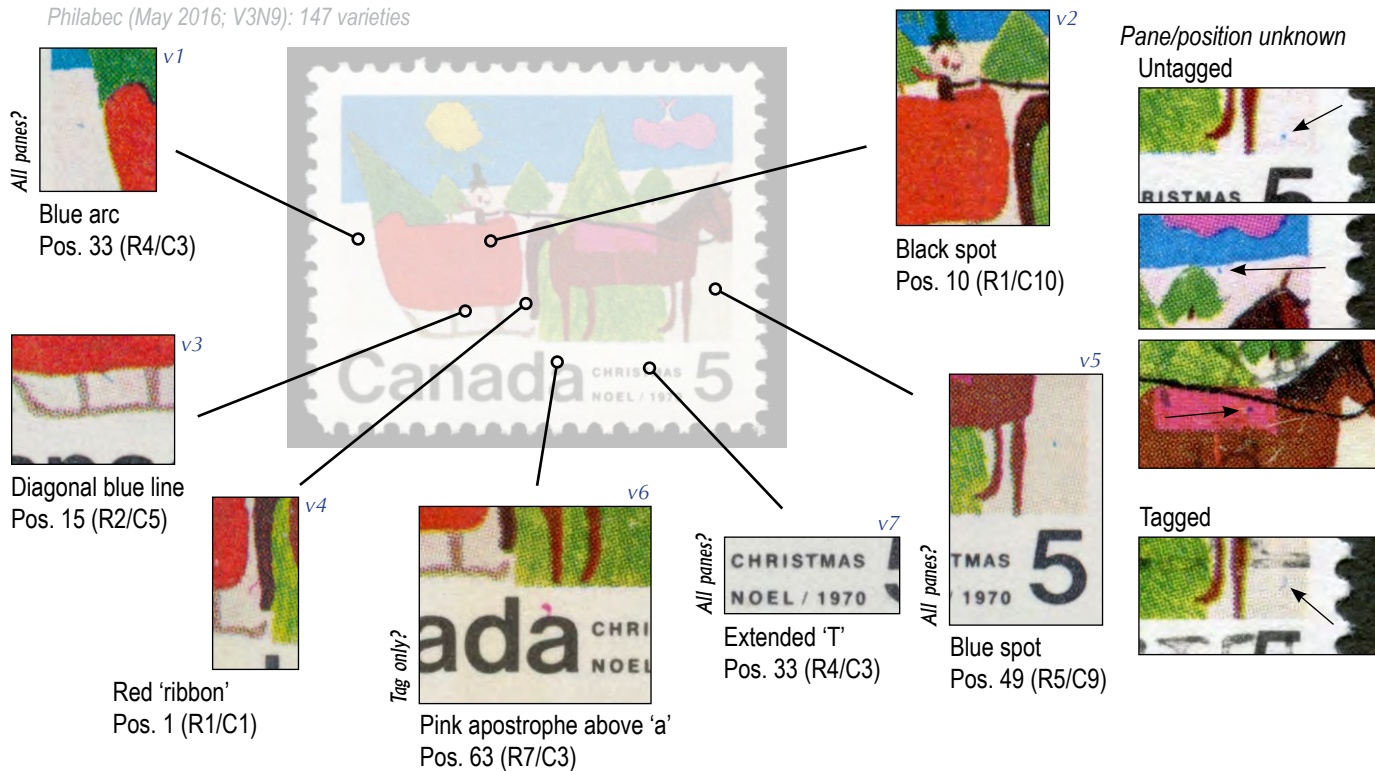
5¢ Santa Claus (Scott 519)

Philabec (Jan 2016; V3N5): 167 varieties



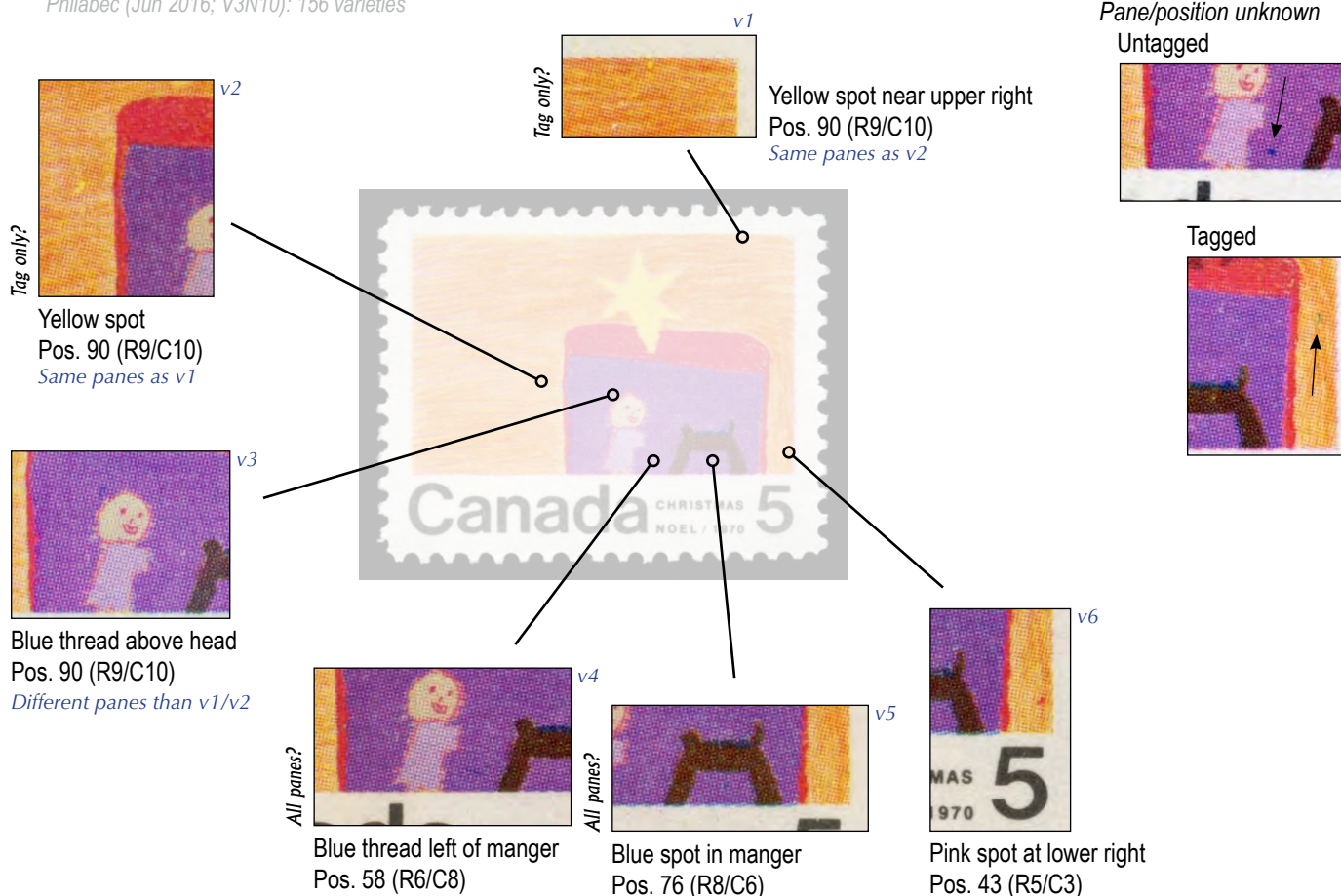
5¢ Horse-drawn sleigh (Scott 520)

Philabec (May 2016; V3N9): 147 varieties



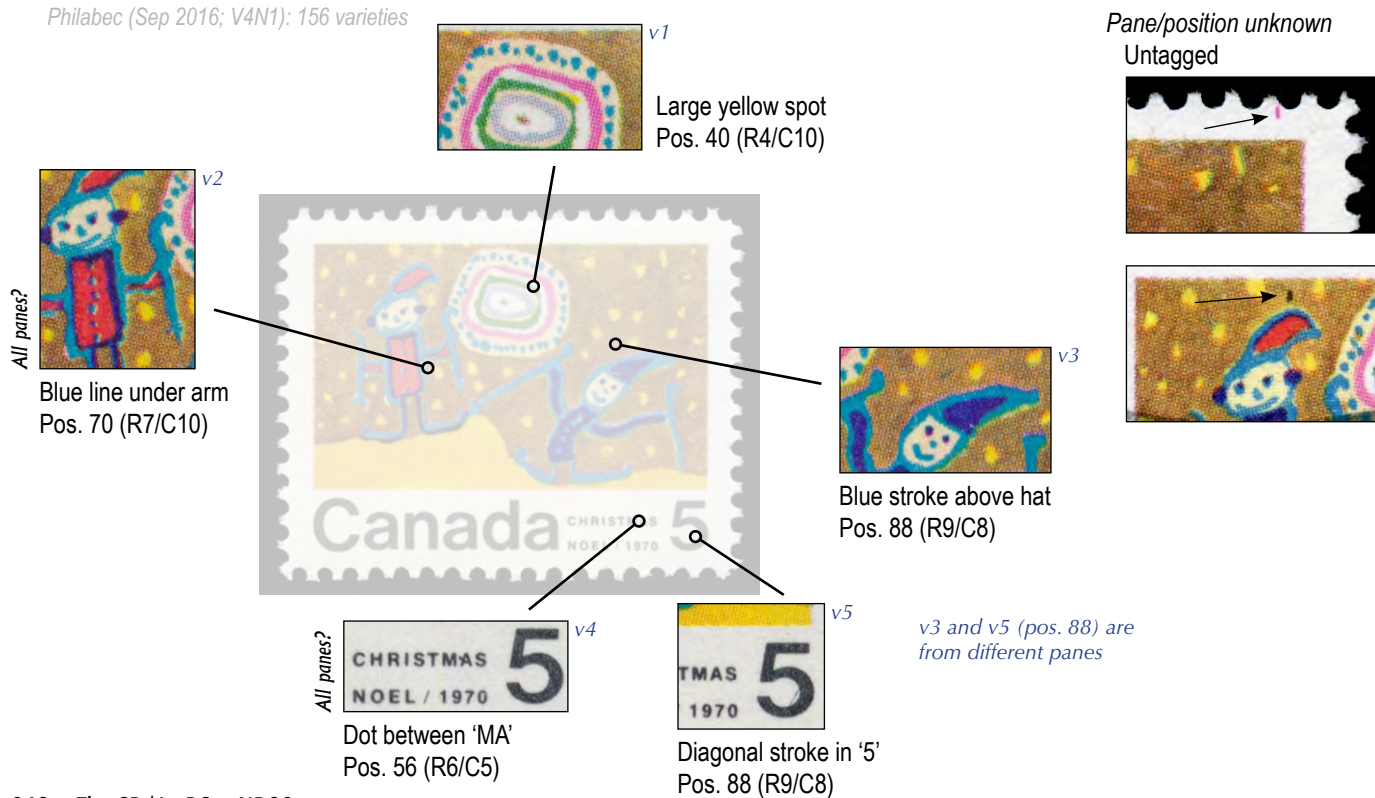
5¢ Nativity (Scott 521)

Philabec (Jun 2016; V3N10): 156 varieties



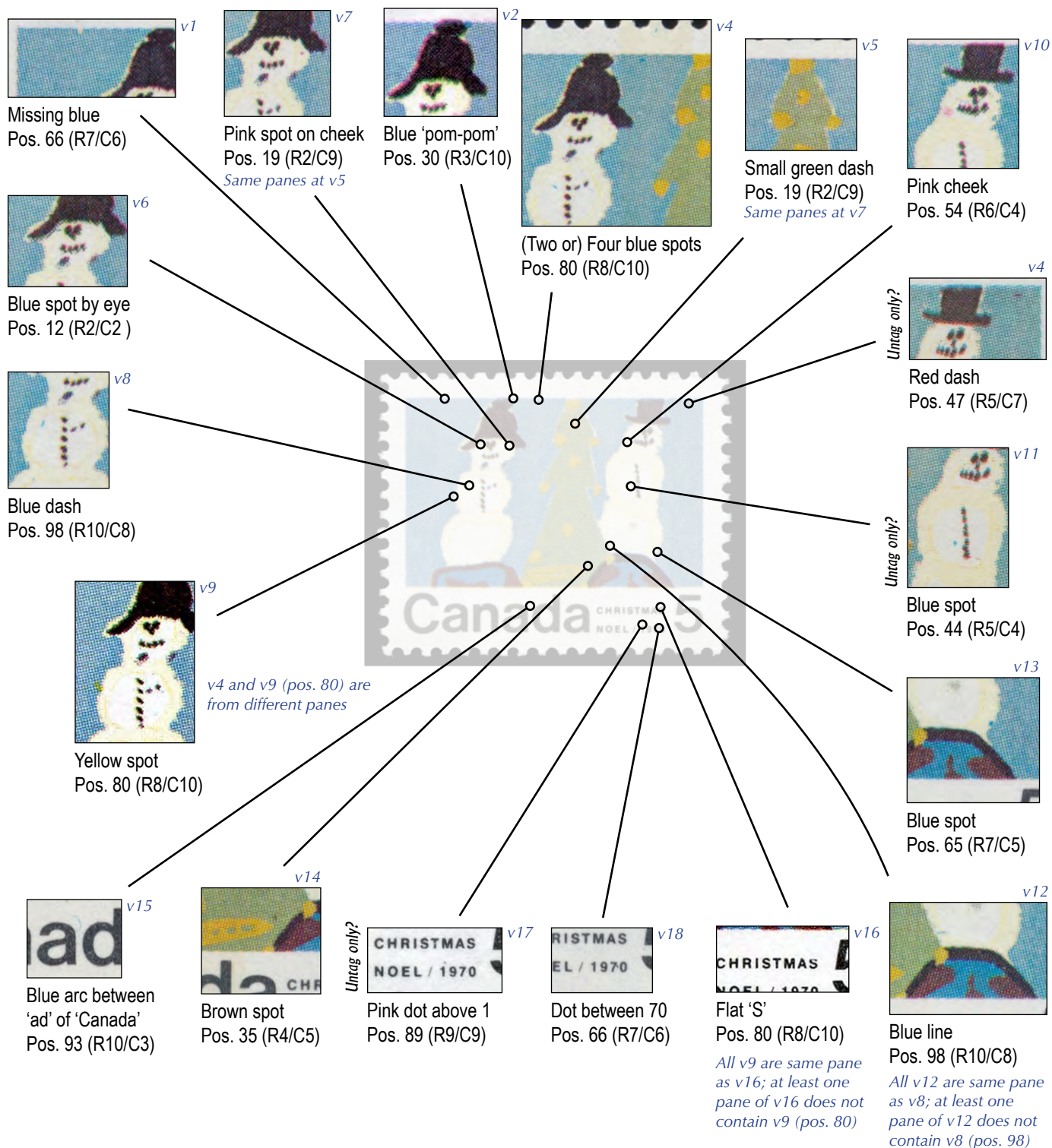
5¢ Children skiing (Scott 522)

Philabec (Sep 2016; V4N1): 156 varieties



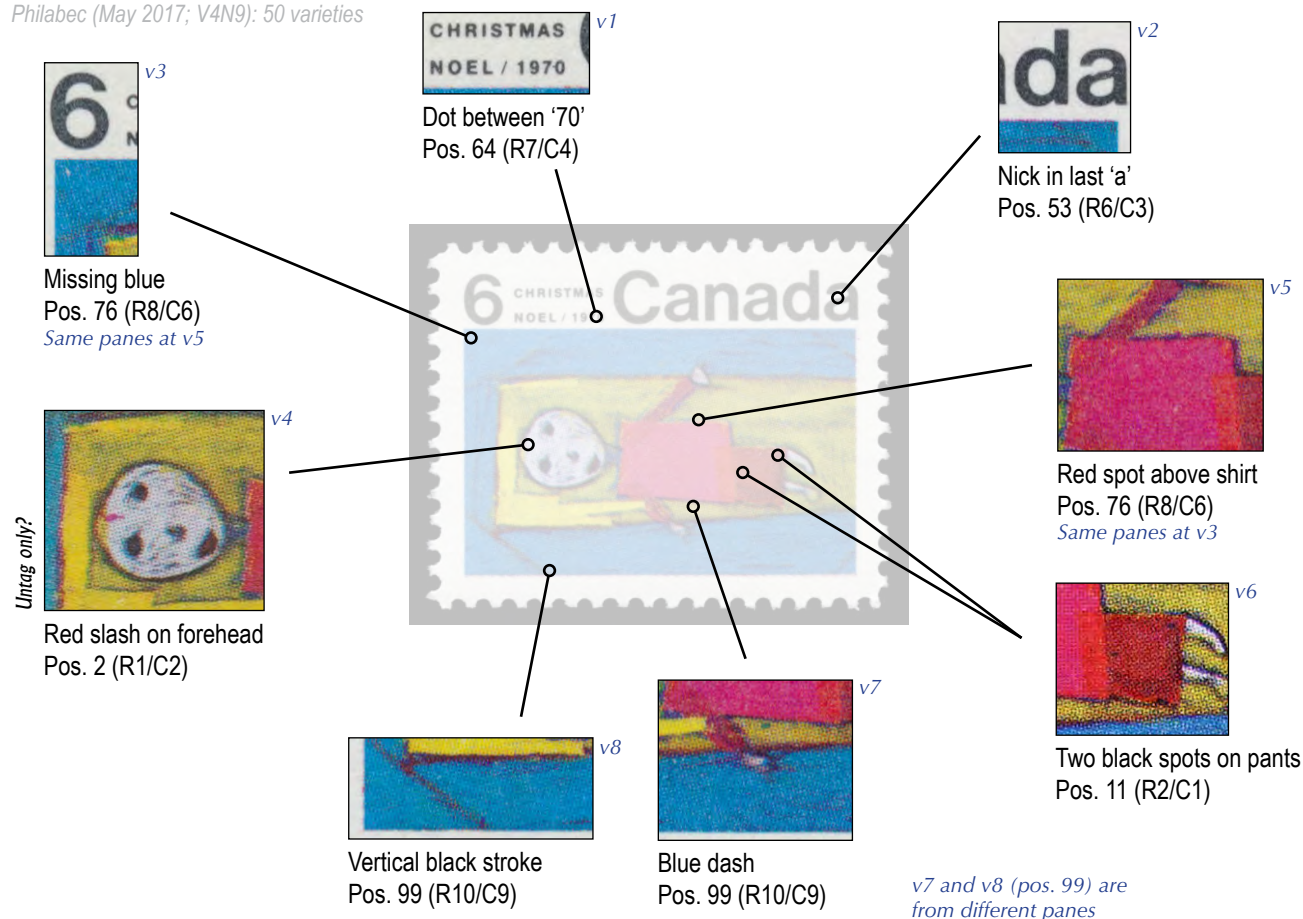
5¢ Snowmen and Christmas Tree (Scott 523)

Philabec (Oct 2016; V4N2): 194 varieties



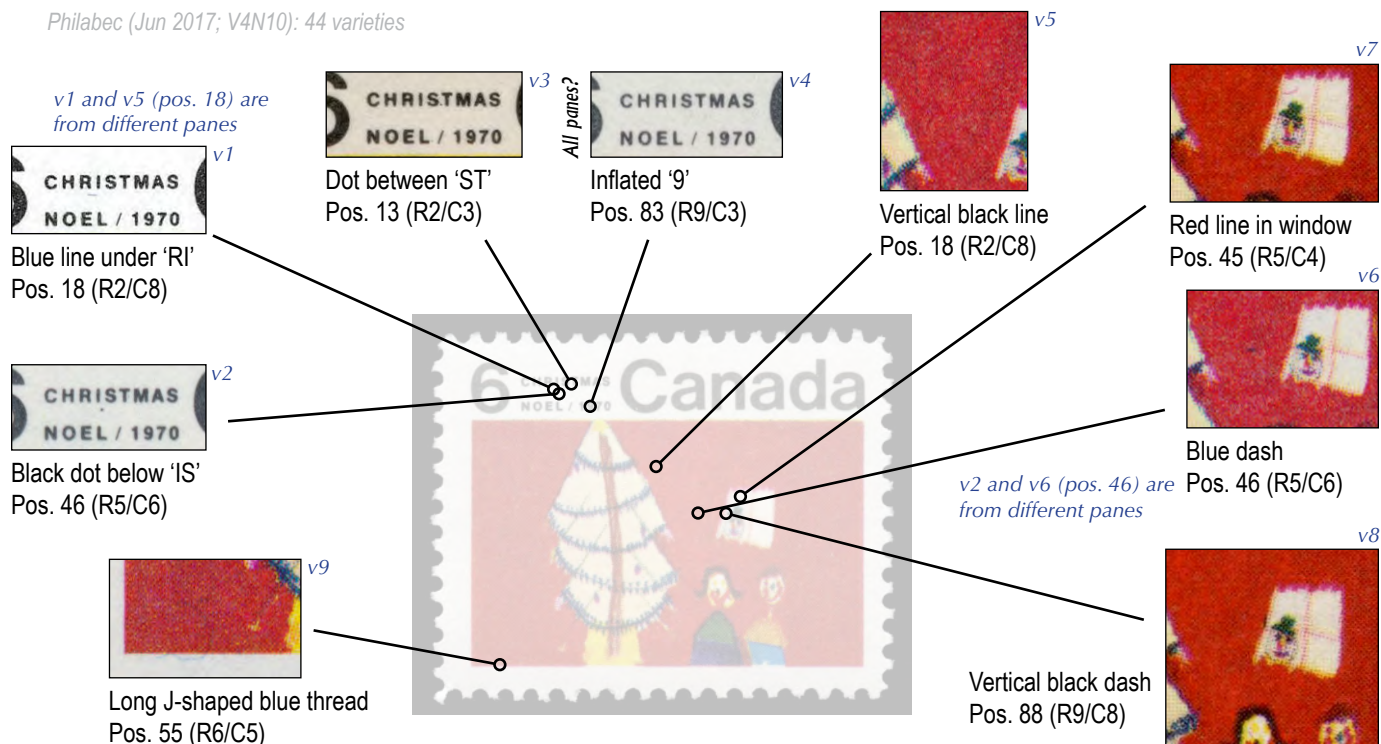
6¢ Christ child (Scott 524)

Philabec (May 2017; V4N9): 50 varieties



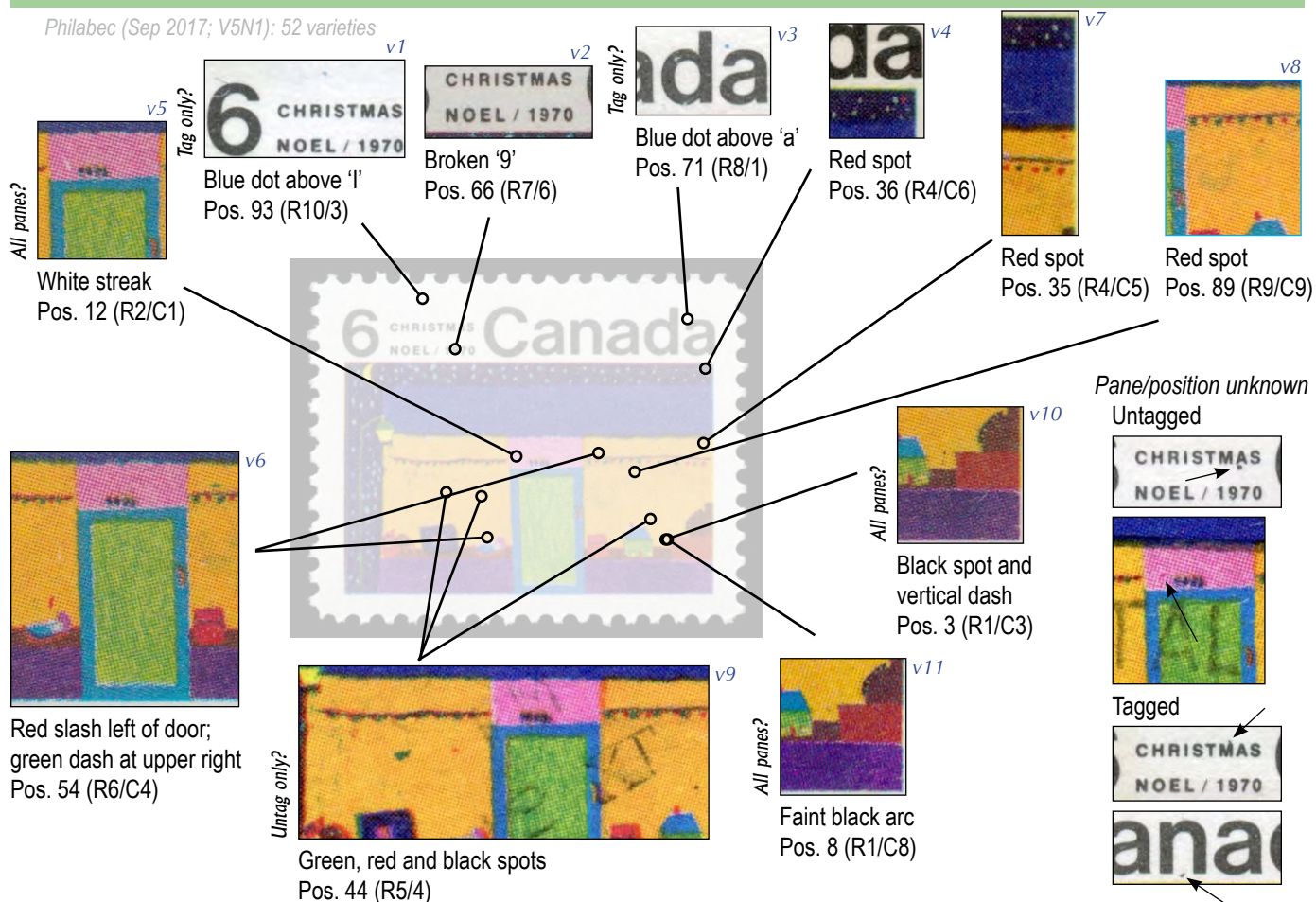
6¢ Children and Christmas Tree (Scott 525)

Philabec (Jun 2017; V4N10): 44 varieties



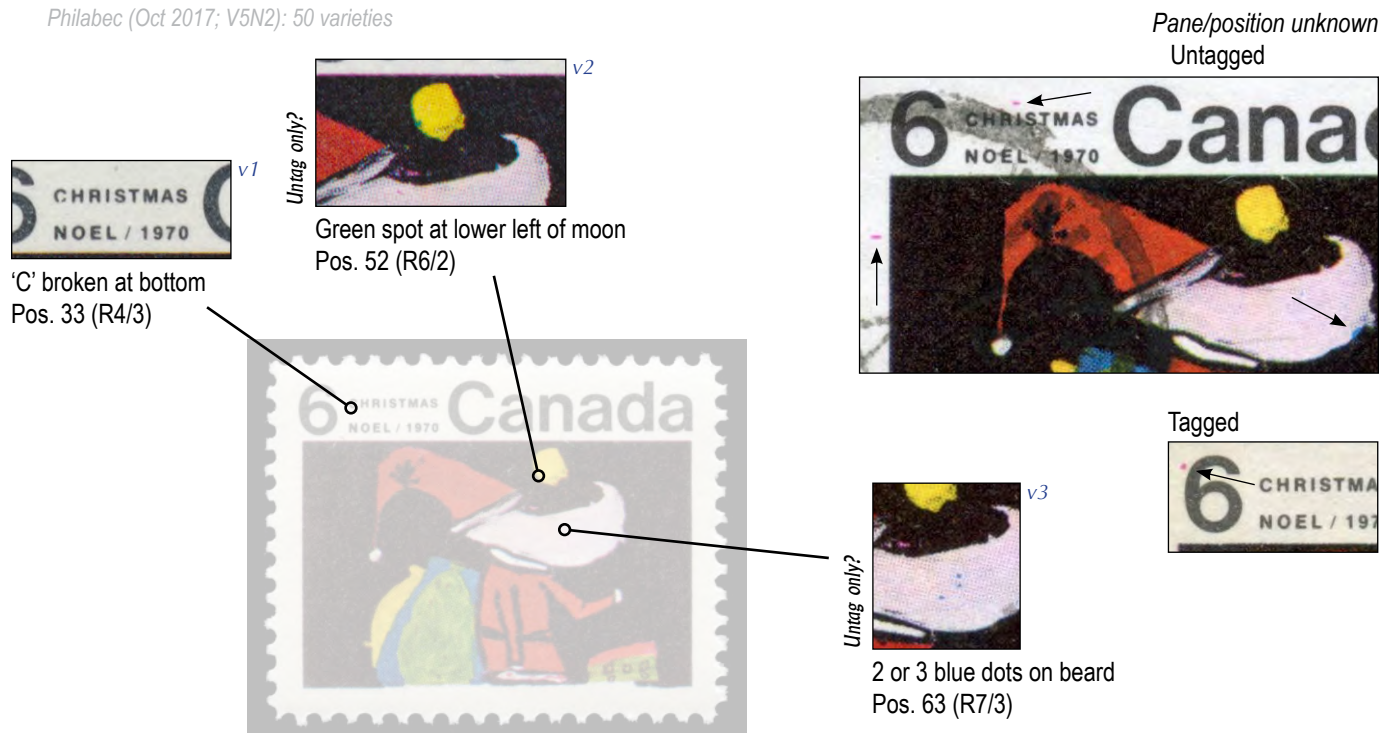
6¢ Toy Store (Scott 526)

Philabec (Sep 2017; V5N1): 52 varieties



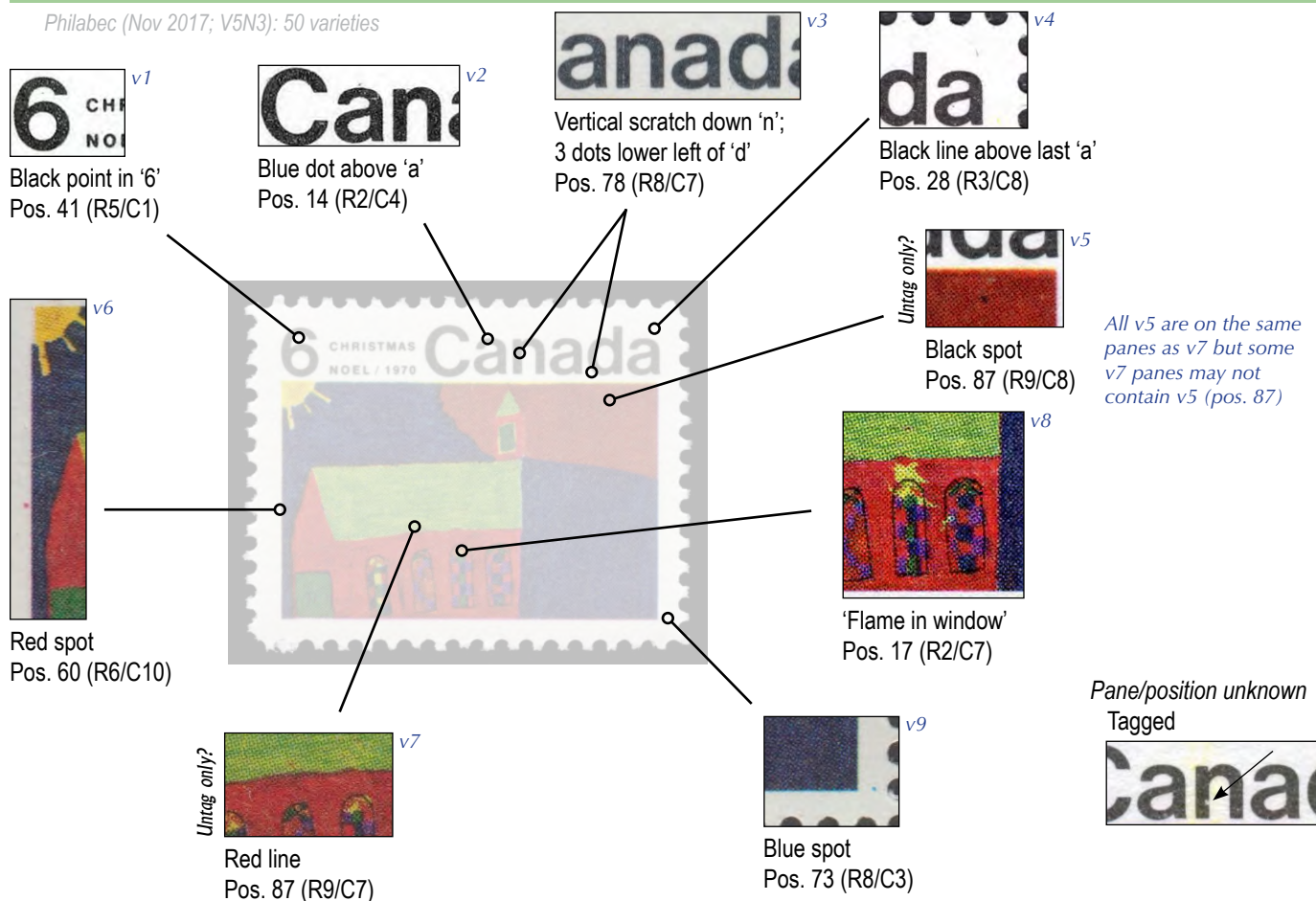
6¢ Santa Claus (Scott 527)

Philabec (Oct 2017; V5N2): 50 varieties



6¢ Church (Scott 528)

Philabec (Nov 2017; V5N3): 50 varieties



10¢ Christ Child (Scott 529) and 15¢ Snowmobile and Trees (Scott 530)



The 10¢ and 15¢ denominations were printed in sheets consisting of six panes of the same denomination (10¢ illustrated at right).

Further study on these stamps is required, and will be appended to ongoing, updated articles as time permits (and will be posted to The RPSC website). ✉

