

Synopsis for BNAPEX 2023

Canadian Postal History: North American Rate & Route Study during Decimal Period (1859 –1868)

Purpose of Exhibit

Exhibit shows use of Decimal postal rates starting with simplest single domestic letter rate FREE followed by franked single letter rate (1/2 oz. and below) upwards to multiples (1/2 oz. and above) followed by registered rates, non-letter and printed matter rates within pre- and post-Confederation Canada to North American destinations. Examples of franked- and stampless-covers will illustrate these rates. Where appropriate, special routes are spelled out and explained. This study will look at such variations as unpaid- or underpaid-letters, special rates and usage outside of the normal mail flow and show conflicting rates or misunderstood rates that originated within postal system of the time.

Exhibit Plan

From a geographical standpoint, the exhibit will begin with postal rates inside of pre-Confederation Canada (consisting of Canada West and Canada East), to eastern interprovincial rates to Maritimes (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island), mail to Newfoundland and Labrador, to the Red River Settlement, to western interprovincial mail as far as British Columbia and Vancouver Island and, finally, mail sent cross-border to United States.

Observations

At this time in Canadian postal history, pre-paid mail wasn't required so oftentimes, a letter was sent without any franking requiring the recipient to pay the postal rate as well as a penalty. At other times, sender could pay proper rate for the letter at the post office in cash and no stamps were affixed. Also, sender could pay postage and a stamp was affixed but extra charges, for example registration, were paid in cash. Sometimes, registration was paid in stamps and postage paid with cash. So, all of these possibilities somewhat complicate a rate study but also generate interesting examples for further research. Similar to today, many special rates and services were available. Within the British Empire, regular soldiers had a uniform 2¢ rate but officers did not get a special rate, except for forwarded mail. There was parcel post for bulky packages and lower rates for deliveries to adjacent towns or for ferriage rates across a lake or river. Photographs, fairly uncommon at the time, had their own reduced rate. The list goes on.

Fortunately, since the decimal period (often referred to as cents period) occurred early in philatelic history of Canada just after pence period, a number of studies have been performed on these rates including a 1976 census by Charles Firby [1], noted postal historian and dealer, a catalog by Firby and Willson [2] and an on-line update by Vic Willson [2], a book by collectors Art Leggett (also a dealer) and George Arfken [3] and a rate study by postal historian extraordinaire the late Allan Steinhart [4] covering a wide period (1711-1900). Articles in philatelic journals such as *BNA Topics* and the *Postal History Society of Canada Journal* and other journals have featured specialized rate studies that cover some aspect of the Decimal period.

Nevertheless, examples of some decimal rates are hard to come up with since, according to the Firby census, there may be only a single documented example (or perhaps only 2-3). New undocumented rates, different frankings of known rates and new examples of undocumented rate covers continue to appear; so, I have endeavored to continue to pursue this area of classical Canadian postal history. In fact, I worked with the BNAPS Books Department on a book showing Leggett's award-winning decimal collection that gives some great examples of decimal stamps and postal history of this era [5]. Art provided me his only coloured copy of his exhibit shortly before he passed and I was able to scan the pages in fairly high quality pictures and assemble the book. Some covers from Art's superb collection and exhibit are displayed in my Exhibit.

Since Firby's original census, published in 1973, newly discovered decimal postal history items have surfaced. I have collected the decimal series for over 30 years and have been able to obtain many examples on cover to put together this exhibit. I have not included my overseas destinations in this current Exhibit but wanted to focus on just the North American destinations. Since I have one of the strongest decimal postal history collections currently including many of the famous items from well-known collections, I have taken the initiative to update the original census using materials from auction houses, private collectors, my own "finds", book and journal publications, etc. This is a mission that may require several years to put into a searchable form on the BNAPS website but census should serve decimal postal history collectors to give them hope to find items to add to their collections and to report new discoveries to help to keep the census updated.

Items of Impact in the Exhibit

Items of importance or particularly hard to find will be boxed with a red border in this Exhibit. The following decimal items are highlighted:

Domestic Letter Rates: earliest known Canadian patriotic cover during royal visit featuring illustration of Prince of Wales (1860) (I have researched this portion of Canadian postal history [6]); a bisected 10¢ Consort paying the 5¢ rate; largest domestic paid cover in decimal era (\$1.42 postage); USA Civil War patriotic cover used in Canada (I have also researched this area in detail [7]), earliest known precancel used on Lady's envelope in 1866, franked distinctive segmented grid - cancelled 5¢ Beaver stamps in advance by the Mill-Brook postmaster. Precancels weren't commonplace until 1873.

Special Domestic Rates: countersigned 2¢ soldier's letters to and from a soldier and a recently discovered from a soldier to a soldier; 25¢ parcel post (single rate, single rate registered, double weight); 2¢ ferriage; 2¢ neighboring town; 2¢ double letter drop rate.

Domestic Registered Mail Rates: sextuple weight, 5¢ Nesbitt envelope with 2¢ registration paid with stamps & 7¢ registered rate paid for with 7 1¢ Queen Victoria stamps; examples of Express services that were a safer alternative to registration (esp. for Money Letters).

Printed Matter (Non-Letter) Rates: octuple (8X) printed matter; 1¢ Newspaper (entire); double weight newspaper wrapper.

Interprovincial Letters to Maritimes: 12½¢ special winter rates via Boston to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; only known registered cover to Maritimes; double circular rate to Nova Scotia.

Letters to Newfoundland and Labrador: only registered cover to Newfoundland (NF); double rated cover to NF; only recorded registered cover to Labrador.

Letters to the West: franked covers to Red River Settlement, two via Pembina, Minnesota; all three single rates (10¢, 15¢ and 25¢) to British Columbia and Vancouver Island, one with a black-brown 10¢ Consort franking; the only decimal registered cover to British Columbia.

Cross Border to USA: early Canadian ensign flag patriotic; beautiful Valentine with embossing, 10¢ Black-brown Consort on covers, one to a Southern State; 25¢ registered cover (highest known value registered postage paid); registered US Civil War patriotic cover used in Canada (reg. paid with cash) to NYC, blockade cover to Confederacy during US Civil War; both rates (10¢, 15¢) to California; 15¢ rate to Oregon (stampless); double printed matter rate.

Special Items: First Day cover (stampless) on title page; covers to show that Canadian stamps were never demonetized: a perforated 3d stamp on cover sent during early in the decimal period and in the Epilogue decimal stamps used in Large Queen era, alone or with mixed franking.

Illustrated Covers: Throughout Exhibit, there will be examples of illustrated covers (e.g. themes include hotel, Canadian- and US Civil War- patriotic, telegraph, insurance, agriculture, manufacturing, religion) which, in the absence of TV, radio, etc. were a major vehicle for advertising- and promotional-events during the 1860s. These examples show major activities that were central to everyday life over 150 years ago. Still, early illustrated Canadian covers from the 1860s are difficult to find.

References

- 1) Charles G Firby, *The Postal Rates of Canada: 1851-1868, The Provincial Period- A Recording, Part II*, for Canada 1859 Issue Stamps, 1976; revised September 1, 1984.
- 2) Charles G Firby and Victor L Wilson, Volume 1, *The Canadian Posted Letter Guide, The Classic Period, 1851-1902*, Charles G Firby Publications, Waterford, MI (1996); updated but not available in hard copy by Vic Willson (2009); web-based copy on BNAPS website (www.BNAPS.org).
- 3) GB Arken and AW Leggett, *Canada's Decimal Era, 1859-1868*, Vincent Graves Greene Philatelic Research Foundation, Toronto, ON, Canada, 1996.
- 4) Alan Steinhart, edited by Gray Scrimgeour, *The Rates of Postage of Canada 1711-1900, Including Some Rules and Regulations Regarding Rating and Treating of the Mails*, Postal History Society of Canada (2011).
- 5) Ronald E. Majors, editor. "The Arthur W. Leggett Exhibit of Decimal Stamps of Canada, BNAPS Exhibit Series No. 94, June 2017.

- 6) Ronald E. Majors and CR McGuire, A Princely Tour: The 1860 Royal Visit of the Prince of Wales to British North America and the United States, Part I, *BNA Topics*, Vol. 73 (#3), Jul-Sep 2016, p. 10-16; Part II, *BNA Topics*, Vol. 73 (#4), Oct-Dec 2016, p. 25-29.
- 7) Ronald E Majors, "United States Civil War Patriotic Covers Used in Canada", *BNA Topics*, Vol 68(#2), Whole #527, Apr/Jun 2011, p. 6-24.