



THE CANADIAN

DEAD LETTER OFFICE

The British North America
Philatelic Society
Dead Letter Office
Study Group
Newsletter

Nov – Dec 2012

Issue 10

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The Victoria Post Office



Article by
Brian Plain

Great Thing About Postal History

Especially Dead Letter Office postal history!

In the last issue of the DLO Newsletter we mentioned how DLO material is found in many areas of postal history. There is probably no area of postal matter that does not end up at the DLO.

While at the recent Maresch auction I saw a variety of items that had been sent to the DLO, especially the Dominion Lands Office correspondence and the Senator Wood correspondence. In the Wood correspondence the ratio of DLO material appears to be 1 in 1000, whereas the ratio of DLO material in the Lands Office correspondence is about 1 in 20 to 30. Why the difference?

It very often begins with the person sending the letters. The Wood material is usually from known parties, aware of the correct address of the recipient and wanting to ensure that the mailing was received. With the Dominion Lands Office in the early days of settlement in the Prairies knowing where to send mail was a gamble at best.

You just never know where you will find it.

Chairman's Desk

With another Christmas season behind us, Gary and I want to wish all of you all the best in the coming year. Although the study of the Dead Letter Office does not have the glitz of some of the other study groups, newly found date stamps and recently surfaced documents all add to our knowledge of this rather obscure topic. With only the two of us reporting and writing about the topic, however, material tends to be somewhat sparse at times and maintaining a reasonable schedule for publication of a newsletter is a bit of a challenge. I know that our membership is small, but I would seriously encourage all of you to consider writing a piece, even a short description of an interesting item, for inclusion in a subsequent issue. At this point, the subjects may be far-reaching, as long as they have some bearing on the Canadian DLO.

That said, Canadian material seems to be showing up a bit more frequently on eBay these days, with some nice items to be found at a reasonable price. Our study ranges far and wide and includes: documents, date stamps, stationery, gateway markings and instructional marking applied at the various DLOs and, of course, the markings of the Undeliverable Mail Office. With regard to the latter, I previously mentioned that the UMO in

Continued page 2 ...

The Canadian Dead Letter Office Study Group

The Canadian Dead Letter Office Study Group comes under the sponsorship of The British North American Philatelic Society (BNAPS)

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Editor's Comments

In Issue #10 we start with Brian Plain's recent exhibit on Victoria Dead Letter Office material.

A short article examines a possible precursor to Canadian Dead Letter Office covers with handstamps. With Confederation in 1867 of four provinces, it took a while to create departments, offices, procedures and policies. Short-term procedures had to be developed until longer-term options became available. If anyone can provide any info on this item it would be greatly appreciated.

An interesting Circular #17 from New Brunswick has surfaced that includes information on how to handle parcels to send to the N.B. DLO.

New handstamps are still surfacing. I suspect this will continue for years to come.

Chairman's Desk continued...

North Sidney, N.S. was to close by the end of the year (2012). In fact, it closed in November, with all UMO functions now being delivered from the UMO in Scarborough, Ontario. If any of you are able to convince your local postmaster to part with a copy of the official (internal) post office notification, I would love to have a copy for my records.

Enjoy this current newsletter, and please pass a copy along to anyone you know who might be interested.

Recent Auction & Sale Listings

Nothing major has come up in auctions lately; a new auction season is starting soon in January.

**The Victoria Post Office
and Undeliverable Mail
1874 – 1925**

When British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871, regulation of postal services was transferred to the Post Office Department (POD) in Ottawa. In accordance with regulations, all undeliverable mail was sent to Ottawa for processing. Prior to the opening of the railway in 1885, transmission of BC's mail was by ship to San Francisco, California or to Tacoma, Washington, then east by train. When the CPR began transcontinental service, procedures did not change, so there was a significant delay in the delivery or the return to sender of BC's undeliverable mail. In 1888, the POD authorized Victoria's P.O. Inspector to locally process most undelivered mail, dramatically reducing the turn-around time of such mail. On July 1st 1898, the POD created several regional Dead Letter Offices, including one at Victoria, to deal with 'dead' or undeliverable mail. The purpose of this exhibit is to show the handling of undelivered mail by the Victoria post office from 1874 to the discontinuance of the service in the mid-1920s. A variety of posted items, date stamps and regulatory markings illustrate the activity of this office.



Exhibit Plan

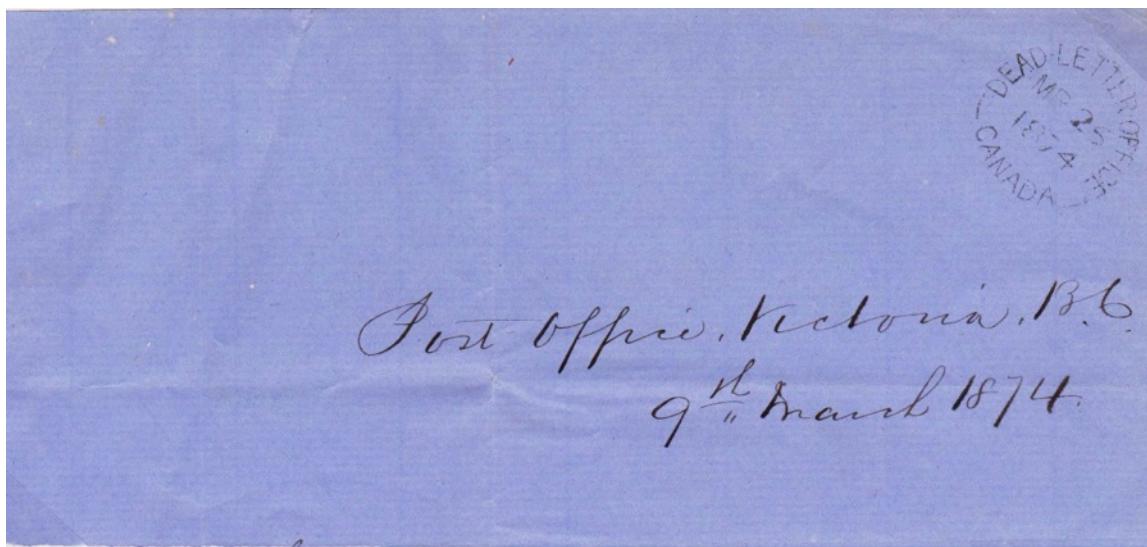
Important items are marked •

Page 1	Title and Exhibit Plan
Pages 2 – 3	The Problem of Time
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Pages 5 – 8	The Expansion Period : July 1st 1898 to 1913 Date Stamps and Instructional Markings
Pages 9 – 10	Yukon Mails
Pages 11 – 15	The Late Period: 1913 – 1925 Date Stamps and Instructional Markings
Page 16	The End of the Story

The Problem of Time**1874**

Located on Canada's west coast, Victoria's post office—in the early years—was bound by postal regulations designed for a service based in Central Canada. These regulations stated:

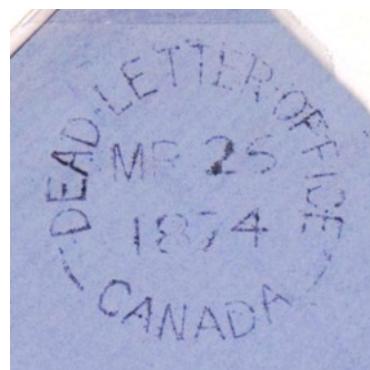
Letters posted without any direction, or addressed so imperfectly so that they cannot be forwarded to their intended destinations, and also unpaid or insufficiently paid letters addressed to countries to which letters cannot be sent without the postage is prepaid, are returned to the writers through the Dead Letter Office.



Reverse portion of a wrapper forwarding a packet of undeliverable mail to the Dead Letter Office, which was in Ottawa. Mailed by Postmaster Wooten of Victoria on March 9, 1874, it traveled on the steamer Prince Alfred to San Francisco, and arrived in Ottawa on March 26, 1874 via New York and Montreal. •

An article in the Daily British Colonist of March 10, 1874 reads: **The Steamer Prince Alfred will set sail for San Francisco from the outer harbor at 6 o'clock this evening.**

The Prince Alfred was a passenger/cargo steamer built in Great Britain in 1852. Owned by Rosenfeld and Birmingham, she sailed bi-weekly between Victoria, Tacoma and San Francisco. The usual transit time was four days. The delay in the trans-continental trip on this occasion was due to a blizzard-related train stoppage in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.



**Receiver's strike DLOS-11
MR 26/1874**

The Problem of Time**1885**

In spite of frequent complaints about the long delay in returning undelivered mail of Pacific origin, the problem remained and worsened through the 1880s.



This cover was mailed at Victoria June 5, 1885 and arrived in Soda Creek on June 10. Held for six weeks and then marked NOT CALLED FOR, it was sent via the post office in Victoria to the Dead Letter Office in Ottawa, where it was processed and finally returned to Victoria, being dispatched from Ottawa on November 16, 1885. The total time from original mailing to return to sender in Victoria was about 170 days. •



DLO dispatch

NO 16 / 1885

Markings applied in
Ottawa

The Victoria Exception**1888 - 1898**

After increased lobbying in Ottawa by Victoria businessmen and politicians, an exception to the regulations was granted to the Victoria post office. In a *Circular to Postmasters in British Columbia*, issued on January 1, 1888, P.O. Inspector E.H. Fletcher advised BC's postmasters that as of that date any letters addressed to places in British Columbia or the Pacific States that could not be delivered, for whatever reason, were to be sent to him for processing.



Reverse shown
75% original

This letter was mailed at Victoria without postage on January 9, 1897. In compliance with the instructions from E.H. Fletcher, it was sent to his office for processing. The shortfall in postage was collected from the sender (who was identified by the P. O. Drawer Number) and the item forwarded on January 11 to the addressee in Vancouver. It was received on January 12. •

To be continued next issue...

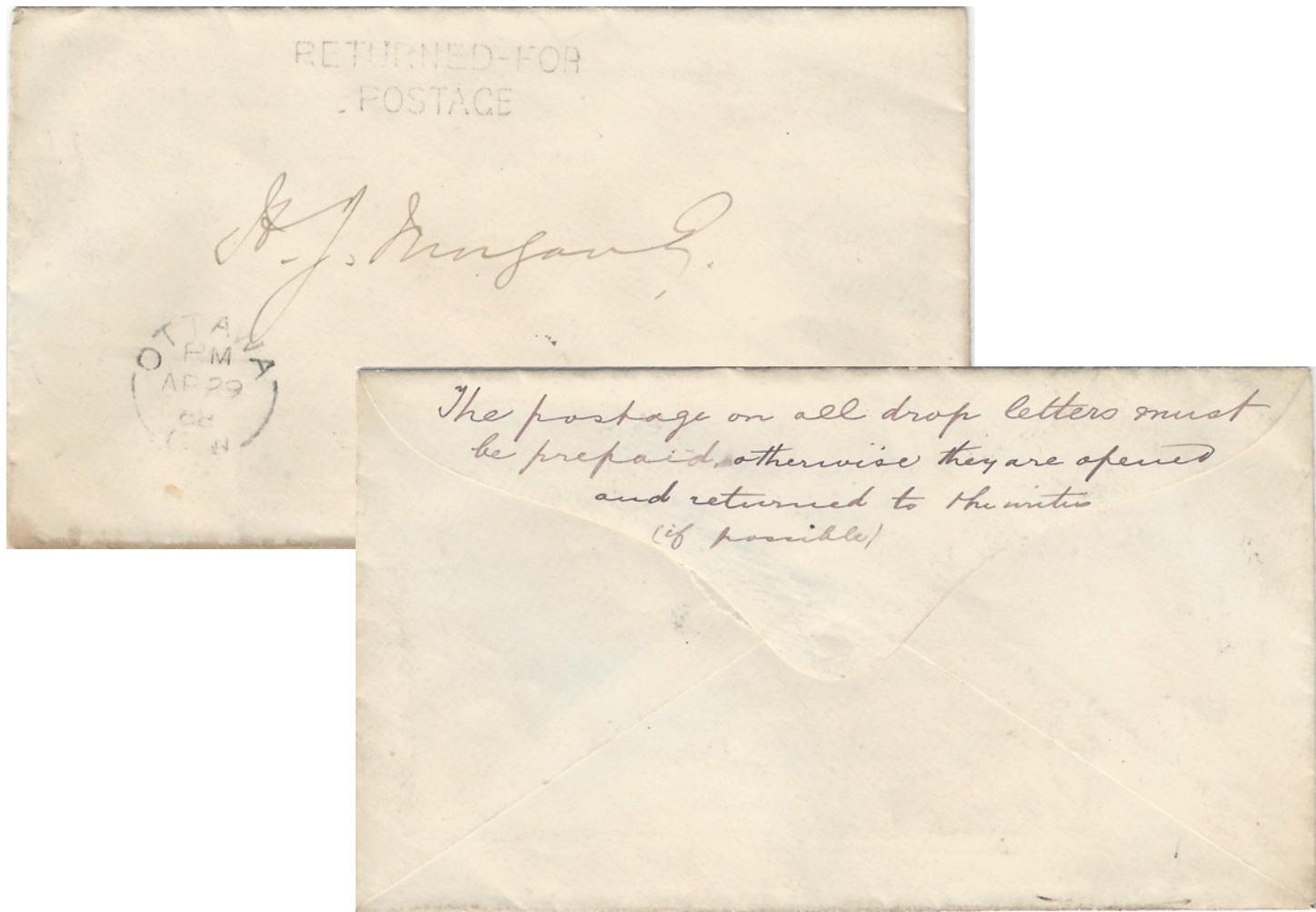
Post Confederation DLO Pre-cursor

by Gary Steele

The earliest known DLO handstamps post Confederation is from 1870 onwards. I have always wondered why we are not seeing any earlier DLO handstamps for the period July 1st 1867 to the end of 1869. During this period the following cover may give us some insight as to how un-paid mail sent to the DLO in Ottawa was processed.

Dated at OTTAWA PM AP 29 68 C.W. the attached cover being unfranked, was stamped **RETURNED – FOR / POSTAGE** and sent to the Ottawa DLO. On the back flap was written:

“The postage on all drop letters must
be prepaid, otherwise they are opened
and returned to the writer
(if possible)



Assuming there were no handstamps yet designed and produced for the DLO, manuscript or printed notes were the only alternatives.

Circular No. 17. New Brunswick Post Office Department 1859

by Gary Steele

Hugh Rathbun, a specialist of Nova Scotian postal history obtained many years ago the attached New Brunswick Circular No. 17. The circular is specific to Parcel Post material. However, sections 9 and 10 list in detail the handling of parcels failing of delivery to be processed by individual post offices to the New Brunswick Dead Letter Office.

Fig. 1 is a manuscript notation (enlarged) on the opposite side:

Circular No. 17. / Post Office Department. / Store?? Feb. 1. 1859, / Regulations respecting / Parcel Postage.

Fig. 2 is the top portion of the circular split into two pieces due to aging of the paper and Fig 3. is the bottom portion.

Fourteen conditions are listed as to the treatment of parcels in the New Brunswick postal system.

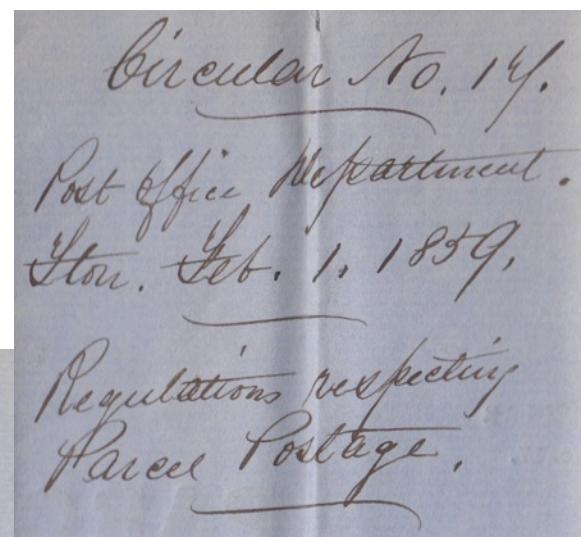
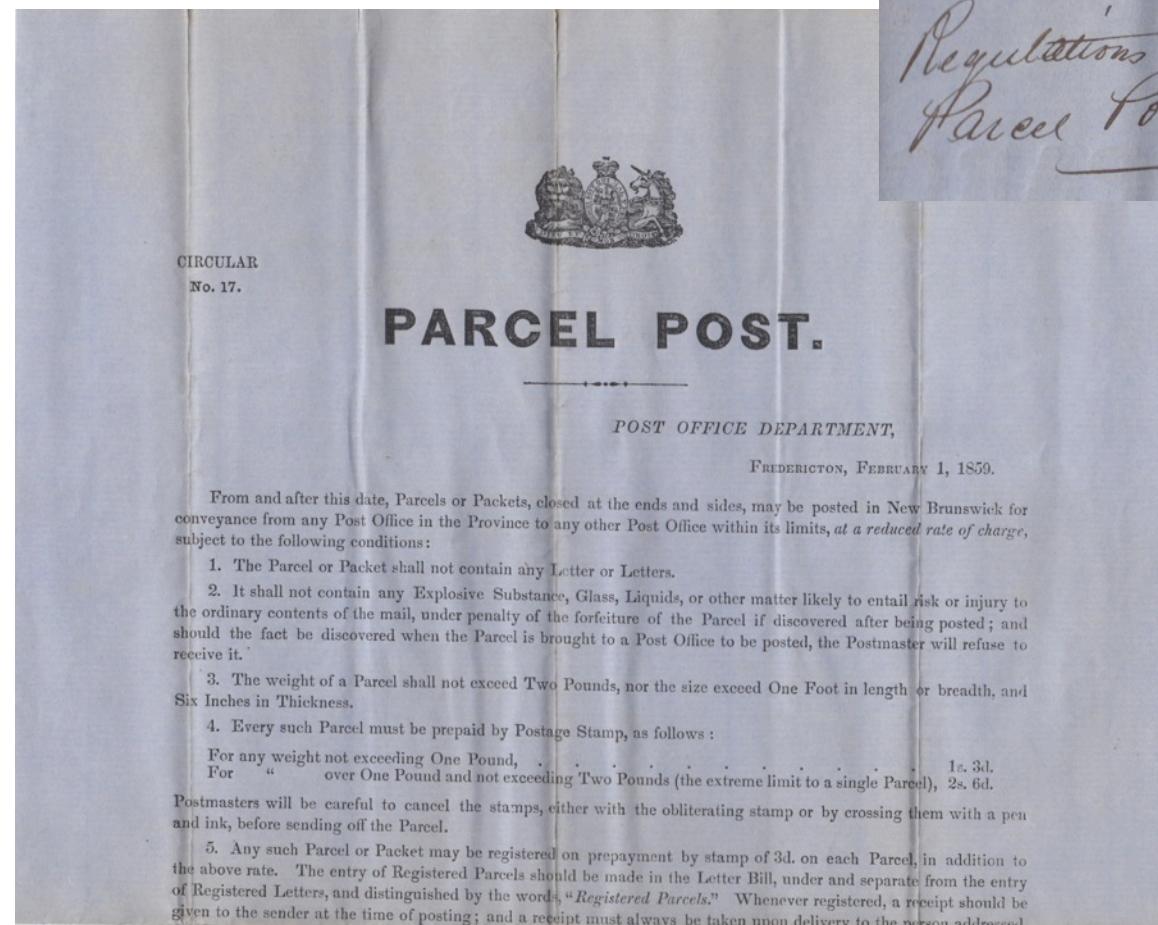
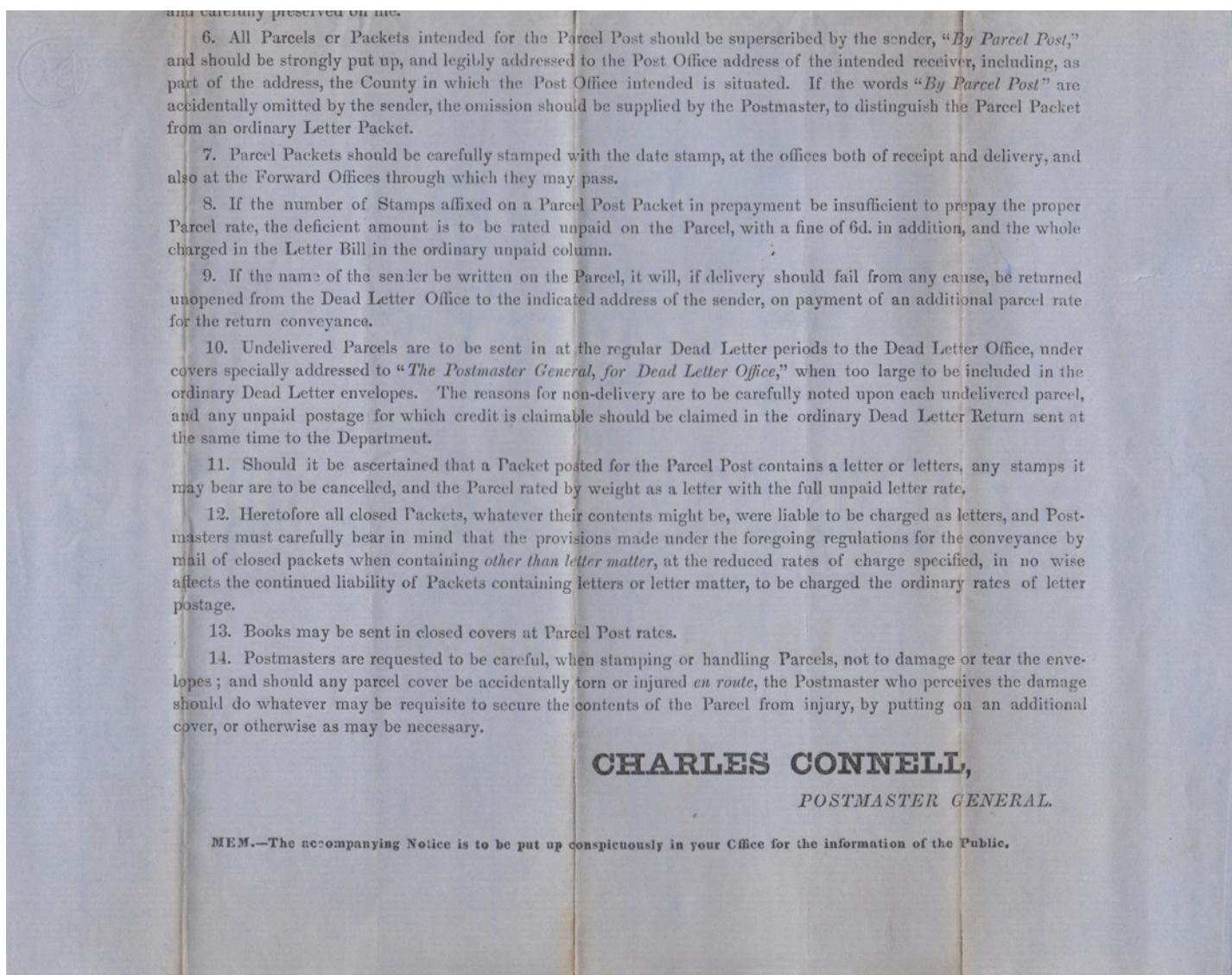


Fig. 2

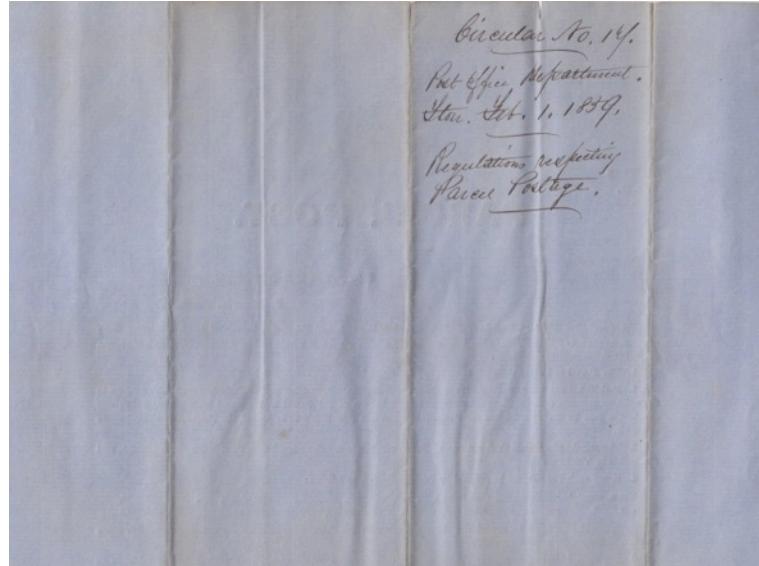
Fig. 3



Note at the very bottom the notation:

MEM. — The accompanying Notice is to be put up conspicuously in your Office for the information of the Public.

Fig. 4 full side.



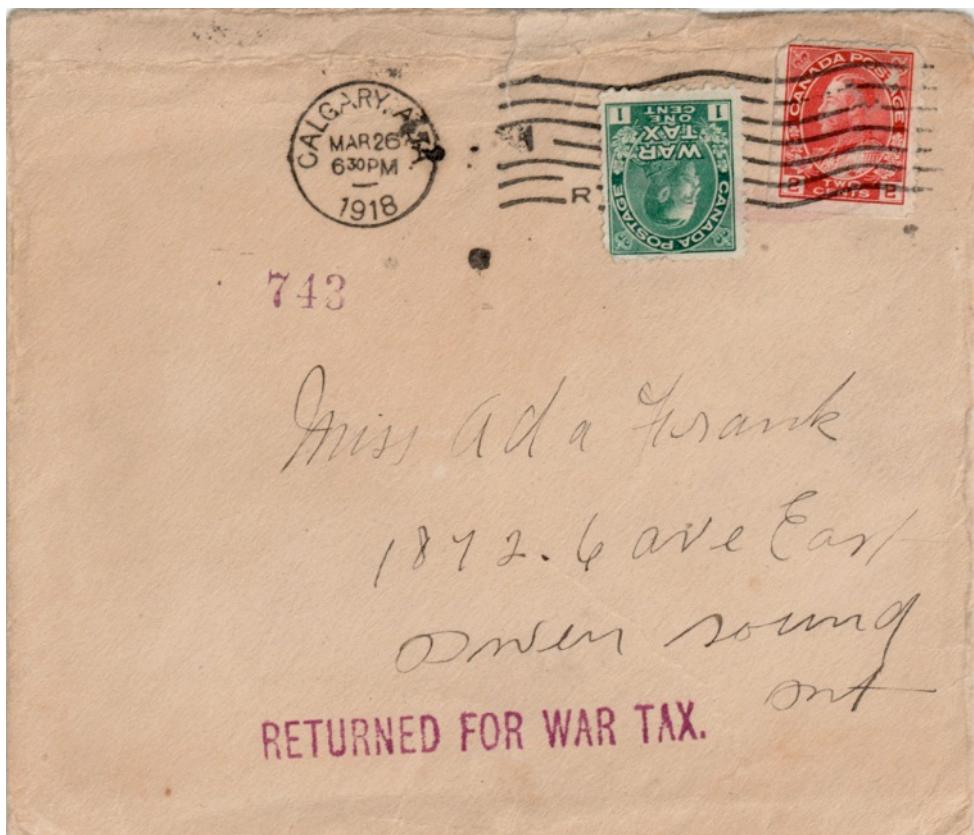
**Branch Dead Letter Office
No. 12
APR 2 1918
TORONTO, ONT.**

Nineteen cities and towns in Canada were designated as Dead Letter Branches or Dead Letter Offices from 1898 to 1954.

The four most common DLO handstamps are: Small Steel Circle, Oval, Rubber Circle, and Rectangle.

A city like Toronto used all four types at one time. Steel Circle handstamps were used in the first ten to twenty years and slowly phased out. Ovals started just afterwards but continued into the mid and late twenties. Ovals can be single, double or triple framed with the double frame being the

New Handstamp by Gary Steele



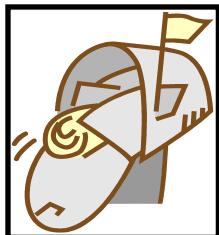
most common. This however does not mean they were a common handstamp, as they varied in size and typeface.

One such group of Toronto Double Oval DLO handstamps has a total of 12 different numbers inserted (possibly to recognize each DLO clerk). Most handstamps are not known with this many numbers, some have only one #, and others up to seventeen.

Only four of these 12 handstamps for the Toronto DLO have been reported #3, #6, #7 and now the #12 listing. The #12 handstamp is fairly faint as it was struck over the back flap with a higher elevation.

The dimensions are 49mm x 34mm. Proofed on November 16 1916. Violet ink.

Member's Mail



We would like comments, suggestions, notes on articles, and questions posted in this section. This will be a forum for trying to use the expertise of all members. There will also be a Bulletin Board that we can use in-between newsletters to hash out certain key points and then have more concrete notes for the newsletters.



Want List and For Sale

Wanted – Documents related to the Dead Letter Office, Canada prior to 1900 bcplain@shaw.ca

For Sale - Canada covers, precancels, plate blocks and other postal history. If nothing showing in your area please email with your want list.

www.canadapostalhistorycovers.com

Wanted - DLO handstamps on cover 1954 down, Registered Ambulance/Return Letter Envelopes with Wax Seals, any DLO correspondence with handstamps and Moose Jaw Local Office. Please e-mail gary.steele@ns.sympatico.ca

Wanted – Place your ad here

Wanted - Mail Service Suspended covers from the Second World War with or without DLO handstamps, please e-mail and I will advise if any particular country is still required: gary.steele@ns.sympatico.ca

For Sale - 1 Cent Jubilee 1897 covers with and without combinations of other stamps. Please email for list or any specific needs. Also have precancels off cover and cancelled stamps gary.steele@ns.sympatico.ca