

THE R.P.O. NEWSLETTER
OF THE CANADIAN R.P.O. STUDY GROUP (BNAPS)

Volume VIII, No. 6

December 1980

HOLIDAY GREETINGS: With this last issue of the year, we wish everyone a happy holiday and a great forthcoming New Year. With the correspondence I am getting enclosing challenges and eyeopeners, with the new catalog, with Lew's increasing response to the new Topics format and with the convention to be held in Ottawa, we should have a truly interesting and hopefully rewarding RPO New Year. Almost forgot, with our previous editor now President of BNAPS, one would think that we should get some of the spoils of office, Now let's think about what spoils!

BNAPS CONVENTION TEXAS - You who missed the convention at McAllen, missed a good one! Held in an enclosed atrium styled Holiday Inn, we took up almost all of the hotel accomodations to ourselves with the exception of a set of rooms already occupied by a group of Evil Kneivel type daredevils (what a combination) We almost got Noble and Lehr to race, but no luck. The setting and the almost exclusive occupancy by BNAPS was particularly conducive to what I think a philatelic convention should be. We were always mixed together with each other and you could join a group discussion throughout the day in the atrium or the dining room directly off the atrium, and such groups were in evidence even up to 3 & 4 in the morning. Since I am a night person, I particularly enjoyed the latter. All the activities were conducted in this relaxed atmosphere, without the constant problems of crowds of non-philatelists. My hat is off to the Texas Beavers (thats really their name) and Lee Brandon who staged the event.

The exhibits were impressive and included several postmark exhibits. I had an exhibit on Maritime RPOs as the only RPO exhibit (felt lonely), there were two Squared Circle exhibits, an excellent exhibit of PERFINs, and a fine exhibit by fellow member Goeff Wallburn on PRECANCELS. Another fellow RPOer, Jack Wallace, from B.C., had an excellent exhibit on B.C. and Vancouver Islands. Last but not least was Clarence Stillions exhibit on the Newfoundland Coronation Issue. That is pretty fair representation, I would say.

The RPO Study Group meeting was held as scheduled and we had a fine attendance of 18, including several non-RPOers. Jim let them in anyway, even though they hadn't paid their dues! This tactic must have worked, because Jim reports that we did get 7 new members at McAllen, The business session and other topics were rushed through because we all were anxious to get to the review of the partial drafts of Lew's new catalog, which I will review briefly here, as follows:

1. It is a major revision and not just a reprint. All the work Lew has been doing with the help of us all, starting from the inventory to the confirmation of strikes and dates (can you imagine his load of correspondence) has been incorporated and it is truly a rewrite of significance to our field. The basic format is the same but it is content that has changed and in my opinion, to the advantage of the specialty.

2. Rarity factors - The system he has incorporated extends the numbering system to 500. This is to allow a wider system of relative rarity and it is my understanding that it encompasses the information from the inventory as well as an estimate of probable future discovery. Only time will tell how well it will work, but my guess is that it will be much more meaningful than the current system.

3. Dates - Now we will have the earliest the latest year date in the catalog in place of the Scott #, which has given me fits since I started. And that goes for all listings and sub-listings, which will help those trying to specialize in an issues or era. To those not familiar, official records are not complete on proofing of hammers or destruction of hammers, so these dates, provided by study group members from their collections, provide the base for our knowledge of each hammer's use.

4. Sub-listings - Now that I have mentioned such, better explain. If a number, principally a clerk listing, has more than one name, each name will be listed separately with its edentification data shown across the page. For example,

Q-195B will have two lines - one for "13" and one for "OT" with all pertinent information shown across the page as only formerly shown as one line.

4. Delistings - As you know, Lew has been both adding and subtracting for a number of years based on research and on intensive efforts to confirm various items of questionable validity. In the new catalog, the ax has fallen! Many of the items not confirmed are gone. Of particular sensitivity (cause I bought some) are the old style hammers with the double and single rims - such as illustrated in this last Topics for Q-100. They are now all one listing - questions! More on this below.

5. New sections - Lew had drafts to us of the following: QUEBEC, ONTARIO, WESTERN, ROUTES, DEPOTS and the new sections on STEAMERS, EMERGENCY AND REGISTERED. Yet to do are the MARITIMES, NEWFOUNDLAND, TICKET STAMPS AND ORNAMENTS. Now you can see why it is a complete revision. Newfoundland will be completed last because Lew is still working on that in terms of hammer analysis and dates. He informs me that a tremendous amount of new information is coming in, a new piece of which is enclosed from Bill Robinson. Will have a newsletter in January with the final installment of Newfoundland material and I pass on from Lew his desire for quick response to that issue because he will hold till received from enough members.

6. Other changes - There will be a narrative introductory set of pages for each section as well as additional and better hammer type illustrations. And more, but I am running out of steam.

Obviously, we were not able to go into all this in detail at the convention but we did get through most of the important points. In all, I felt that there was a very favorable reaction from the study group members and it was agreed that Ludlow was to be heartily congratulated for a super effort which one and all were aware has taken a tremendous amount of time, skill and uncanny devotion. Lew, CONGRATULATIONS FROM US ALL - now we will wait! Am enclosing Lew's "words" in the form distributed at the convention as a handout with his own discussion of the partial drafts. Believe me, getting this all done and through the mails at the right time took some doing.

METALLURGY - Sounds like a wierd subject for an RPO newsletter. Not so! As you know, the hammers were made of steel, as were the plates for engraving and printing. As you should know, many of the cracked plates of the early stamp era originated from stress cracks in the steel from which the stamps were printed. These cracks came from stresses resulting from how the steel was heat-treated and in the early days they didn't know how to do that very well. Same, I think, is true of hammers. They either wear well or poorly depending on the quality of the steel and the condition of the steel from its heat-treatment. Now, that gets me to Lew's question on Q-100 and other hammers of that period. My theory is that the double lines are a result of a heat-treatment, in which the engraving was done first, as it would have to be, in soft steel, and then hardened by way of what is called "case hardening". Case hardening is a heat-treatment in which only the outside surface is hardened. By being very hard, it is also very brittle, and the steel under the hard outer surface is relatively soft. Hence, through wear, this hard outer layer would wear off leaving the center soft - which would in turn wear faster than the outer hard edges. Hence, with the top of the rim worn off, the ink would adhere to the protruding outer edges of both the rim and letters (I have a strike of Q-100 with all letters showing double lines along with the rim) A later change of heat-treatment, using a different technique, by which the whole of the hammer was hardened, would have eliminated this effect. Does anyone have a better or another theory? Comments?

From Joe Purcell - Joe has sent along (actually he gave it to me in Texas) a copy of R-165M (copy attached at enclosure I) with the following:

BILLINGSGATE NFLD to TRINITY NFLD, backstamped TRINITY, June 17 1927 and addressed to BLANC SABLON (PQ)

This run was first reported by Ed Richardson in Cdn. Philatelist Vol. 15, No 2 , Page 66. This one was postmarked MAGOG P.Q. and addressed to the USA.

It was cancelled with Admiral stamps - no date given. This poses many questions:

1. Did Newfoundland & Canada Postal Services use a similar Rubber cancelling device - with the same error in spelling?
 2. Did Newfoundland use travelling letter Boxes?
 3. Probably this cancel was applied in Canada?
 4. Were there more than one of these devices with the error?
 5. I would think this one & one reported by Ed were applied at widely separated points?
 6. As this letter was re-addressed, why would such a cancel be applied?
- Re-addressed mail would normally be carried in closed bags - which would travel in an RPO. Travelling letter boxes were normally situated in baggage cars on runs without a mail car."

J. L. Purcell

Editor - I have the strike on cover from St. Johns, Nfld. to North Sydney. Was it applied on the route to St. Johns, enroute to North Sydney? - onboard ship? Who can answer this one! There is obviously a major question not being asked which has ominous implications? I know that there are some other cover strikes of R-165M in collections that I am aware of - if those with such would send me a copy then we could possibly piece some of this together and narrow down the questions - and maybe come up with some answers.

SOMETHING OF INTEREST - I learned at Texas that Train #s have a logic which is that even numbers are for East and South and odd numbers are for West and North. I hope I'm not alone in my prior ignorance or I wasted my time imparting this little gem of wisdom coming from one of the Bull sessions at the convention.

FROM BILL ROBINSON - A new Newfoundland cancel - NOTRE DAME BAY NORTH TPO / NEWF. The copy of the cover will not reproduce well so here is my rendition:



Enclosure IV

FROM JEAN-PIERRE FOREST - A question on the use of Q-232 UP & DOWN on the same cover. Have enclosed a copy of the cover and here is Jean-Pierre's point:

"What happened aboard the GREAT TRUNK MAIL CAR on that June 7th, 1862?

The why and how of the two different Q-232 strikes on the same cover leave many collectors arguing, and many others perplexed. One may explain it as a clerk error who realized that the letter was franked with Q-232 bearing direction "UP" then franked it with the hammer corrected (NO 2 direction DOWN). But the most plausible explanation seems to be that trains stopped between Quebec and Riviere du Loup only when refilling with wood, coal or water was needed. So that the train stopped at Saint Pascal de Kamouraska on its way toward Quebec (UP) then returned to Riviere du Loup (DOWN) without stopping at Saint Pascal. Is anyone able to confirm this against the time table?"

Enclosure III

NEWF'D NORTH SYDNEY - Goeff Wallburn gave me a copy of the enclosed cover at the convention to illustrate the NEWF'D P.O. / NORTH SYDNEY cancellation as well as N-75. I have since learned that the cancel was applied by Newfd. post office clerks in a Newfd. post office located at the port at North Sydney. I also found out that this subject had been well researched and such research is contained in a booklet by Ron McGuire of the Postal History Museum. Question. Does that mean that Newfd. cancellations with North Sydney in the title would or would not be classified or includeable in a Maritime collection - if one were a specialist? North Sydney is certainly not a Newfd. town so how would one classify? Enclosure II

DUES - Beginning in the New Year, your dues are payable to Jim Lehr and I know that he would appreciate receiving them as soon as possible. Five Bucks (US) again, and send to Jim at 2918 Cheshire Road, Devon, Wilmington, DE 19810, USA.

NEW MEMBERS:

G. Palmer Moffat	- 4542 E. Camino de Oro, Tuscon, Arizona 85718
Rick Parama	- 20 Seymore Crescent, St. Albert, Alberta T8N 0K9
Elwood S. Poore	- 302 S. Denton, Gainsville, Texas 76240
Harry Dingenthal	- 2309 Northumberland St., Garland Texas 75041
Alexander M. Unwin	- Box 1686, Bellevue, Wash. 98009
Clinton A. Phillips	- 1704 Glade St., College Station, Texas 77840
Allen L. Steinhart	- 45 Dunfield Ave, Apt. 1910, Toronto M4S 2H3
Richard Colberd	- 814 Snyder Hill Rd., Lititz, Penna 17543
George MacManus	- 12 Aurora Crescent, Nepean, Ontario K2G 0Z7

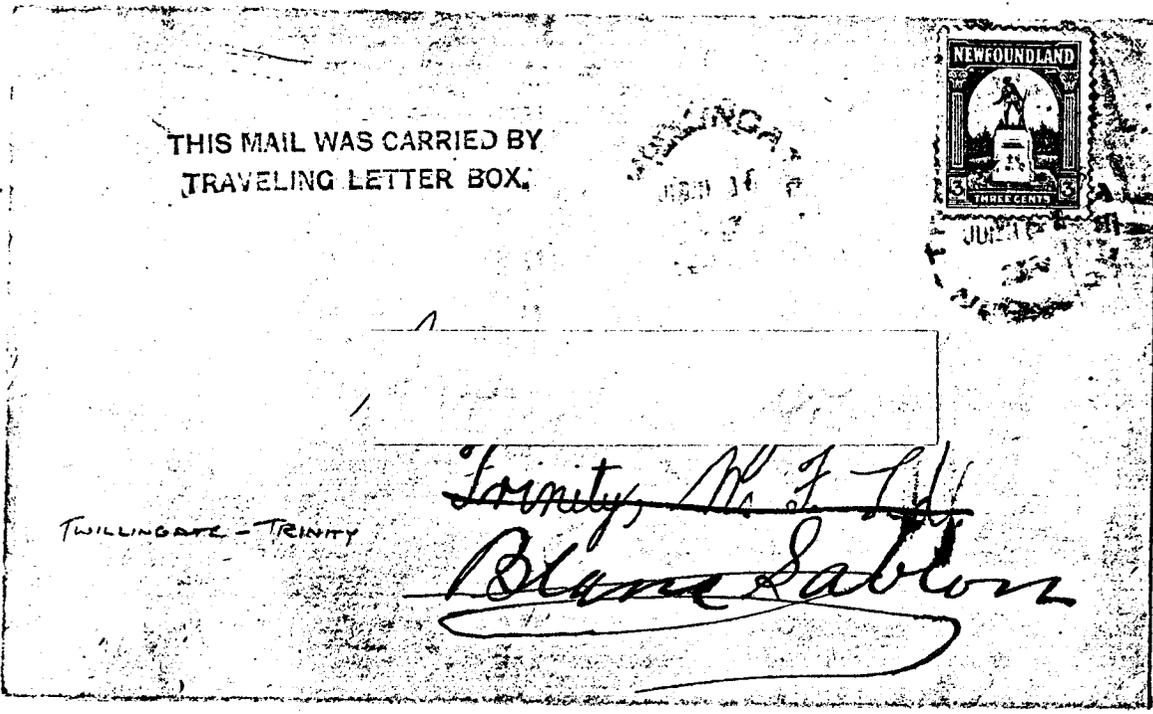
Welcome Aboard - and let us hear from you with questions and comments?

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

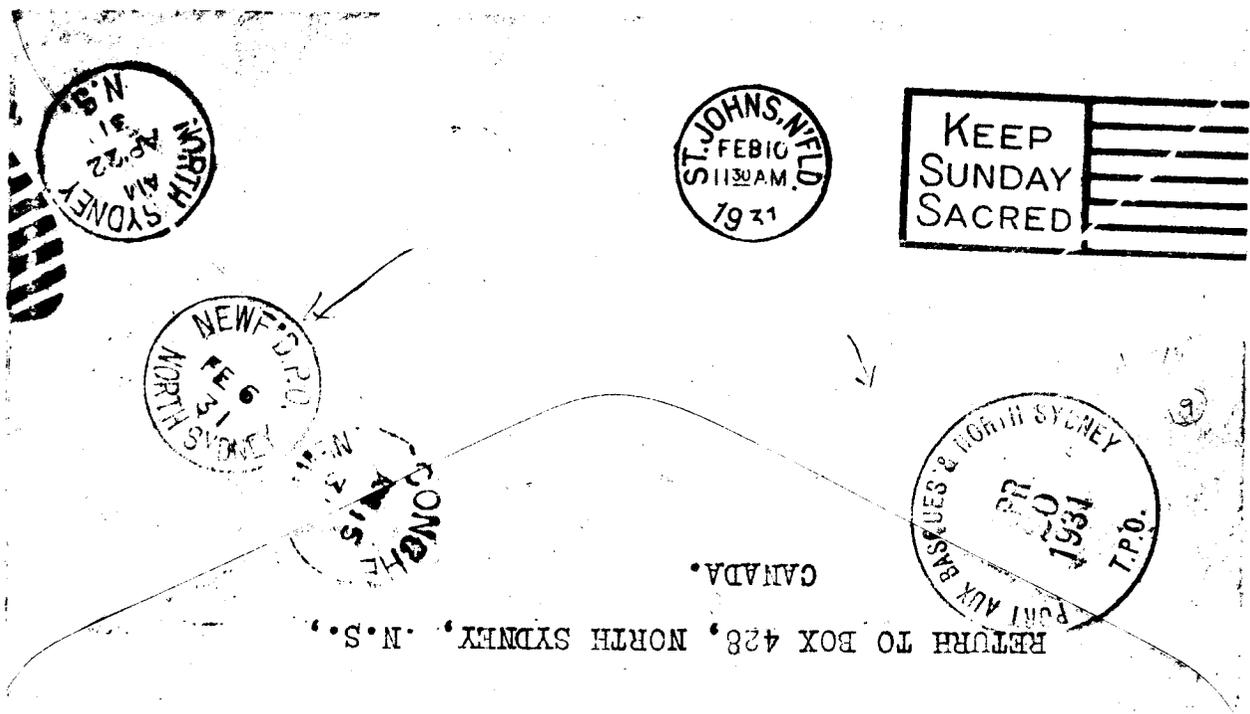

Dave

P. S. Almost forgot - got the answer to L. Gillam's question concerning the strike illustrated in the last issue - came from Jim Felton, J. Purcell and Jean-Guy Dalpe - the last of which furnished this perfect strike for our use:

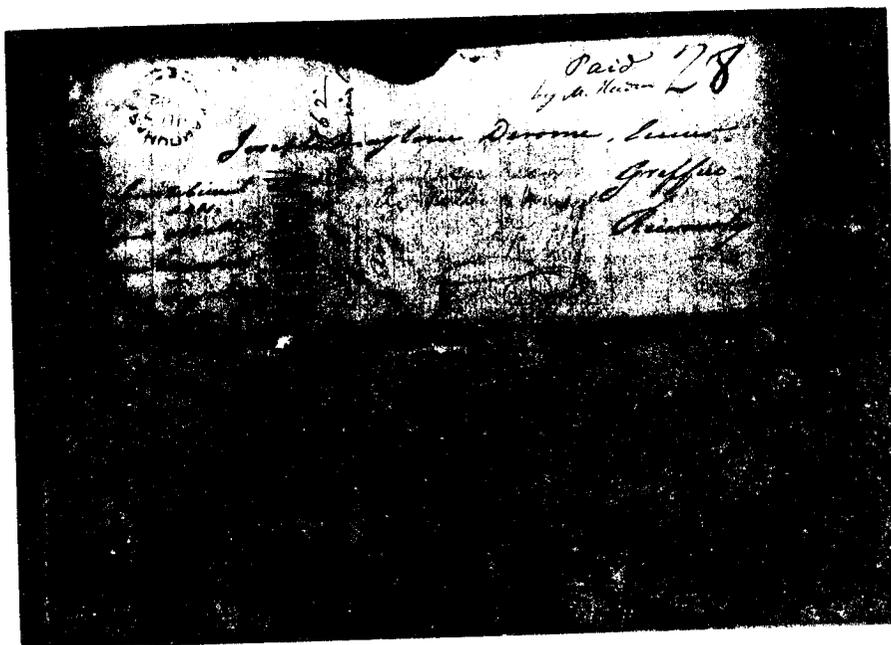
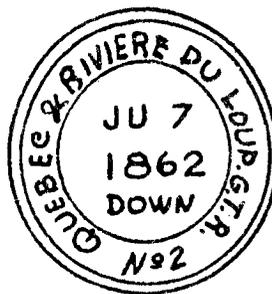
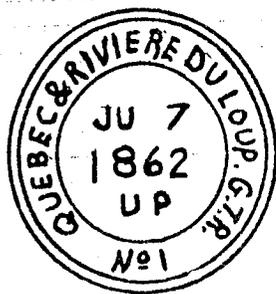




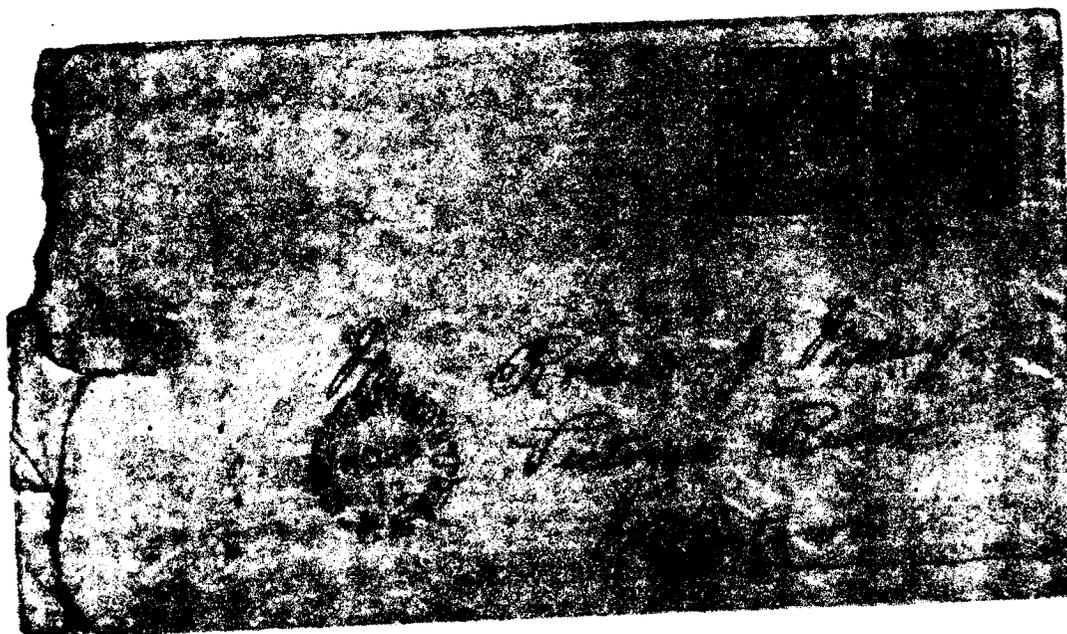
Enclosure I - J. Purcell



Enclosure II - G. Wallburn



Enclosure III - J.P. Forest



Enclosure IV - Bill Robinson

Greetings to one and all railroaders from far across the Pacific in Japan; am truly sorry that Mac and I can not be with you this year, from both the personal and the philatelic points of view. First, we both would like to see all of you again for the process of breaking bread, bending elbows and enjoying good all around fellowship; this is most important. Secondly, however, we are sorry we can't be there to share with you the progress we have made on the new R.P.O. catalogue. Before actually getting into the actual production of this new book, at the planning stage it looked reasonably straight forward; however, after moving into the typing process, it moved to a different drummer.

As many of you know, there has been a tremendous amount of preparation required to mount this new effort, which in many areas is quite a drastic and radical change from our last catalogue put out in 1975 and the previous Shaw catalogue. It has taken over three years to reconstruct the earliest and latest years for the periods of use. It took almost nearly as long to develop our statistical basis for the calculation of rarity factors, a process that required many different testings and evaluations before we felt it would stand scrutiny.

We have asked Dave and Jim to show you where we are in the form of a partial draft of those sections so far completed; they include Quebec, Ontario, Western, Routes, Steamers, Registered, Emergency and Depots. Still to be completed are Newfoundland, Maritimes, Ticket Stamps, Ornaments, Train Numbers, plus all of the qualitative comment of explanation, so necessary for informed use of the catalogue, that was missing from the 1975 edition.

What you see before you has been over nine months in actual physical preparation. The Steamer Section has been through four drafts and three complete retypings. The Quebec Section had to be done twice to reflect additional reorganization and new data. The Depot Section will have to be done again, but this is no major problem.

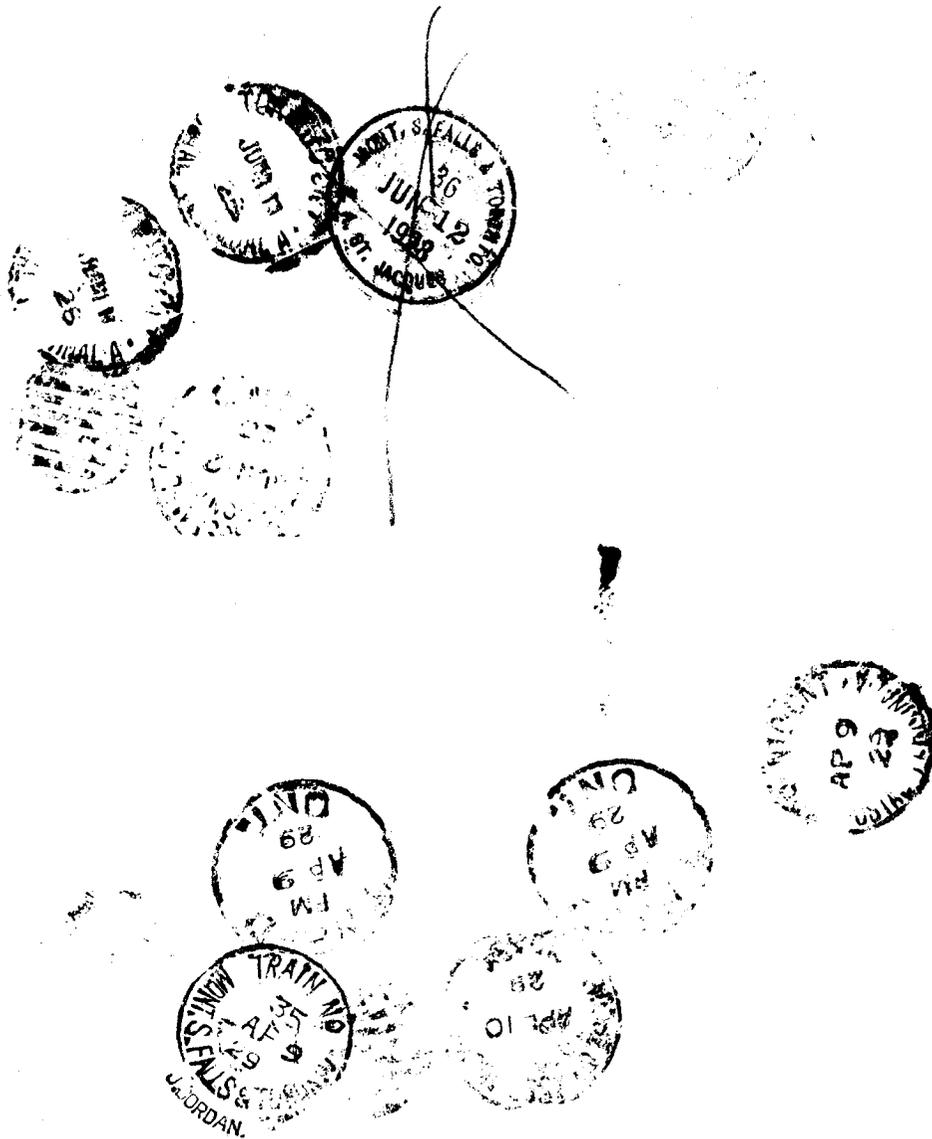
Two major areas are worthy of special comment. First, there has had to be extensive renumbering of the listings. The creation of the several new sections left large numbers holes in the old sections, and so gutted that old Route Section that we had to renumber the whole section. We have tried to confine the changes in listing numbers to the clerk strikes and less well known cancellations, but have not hesitated to change others if required to do so for reasons of clarity. Our basic premise has been that if changing was required, now was the time to do it, again with the creation of the new sections, and to do the changes in such a manner that no other major changes will be need again in our lifetime. It is a bullet-biting process, but now was the time to bite. Where any listing number has been changed, you will note that the old number has been referenced in the Reporter column.

The second major area of change is in the rarity factors. With over three thousand (3,000) subjects involved, and after thorough checking with sample distribution, it was decided that the 200 maximum scale did not give sufficient breadth for our planned statistical presentation of rarity; accordingly the scale was expanded to a 500 maximum. It is to be understood that the rarity factors presented are only meant to give a relative relationship one to the other of all 3,000 plus listings in terms of current existence and the probability of finding such listings additionally in the future. Only existence and probability, they do not reflect quality of strikes, backstamps or cancelled on stamp, facing slips or clerk strikes on cover, partial or socked on the nose, all of which may affect value, but which are individually subjective rather than quantitative in terms of our statistical approach. It has been suggested that this system is new, novel and somewhat radical, to which we agree; however, the old rarity factor system had almost lost all meaning, so the time had arrived for an imaginative new system. We have now tested this on a broad sample of collectors and dealers, who after their initial intrigue, have found it interesting, agreeable and thus acceptable. We trust you will all find it equally so.

Jim asked for a short message; this is already a bit too long, but as you can see I become somewhat wrapped up in my work. We hope you enjoy seeing it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together up to this point. We estimate that another ten weeks should see this through to the end, and we will try to have it ready for everybody in time for Christmas, Murphy's Law notwithstanding. Have a wonderful convention; wish we were there with you. We will definitely be looking forward to seeing all of you at Ottawa next year.

Enclosure *V*

Lew



Here are a couple of new clerk hammers just sent to Lew.