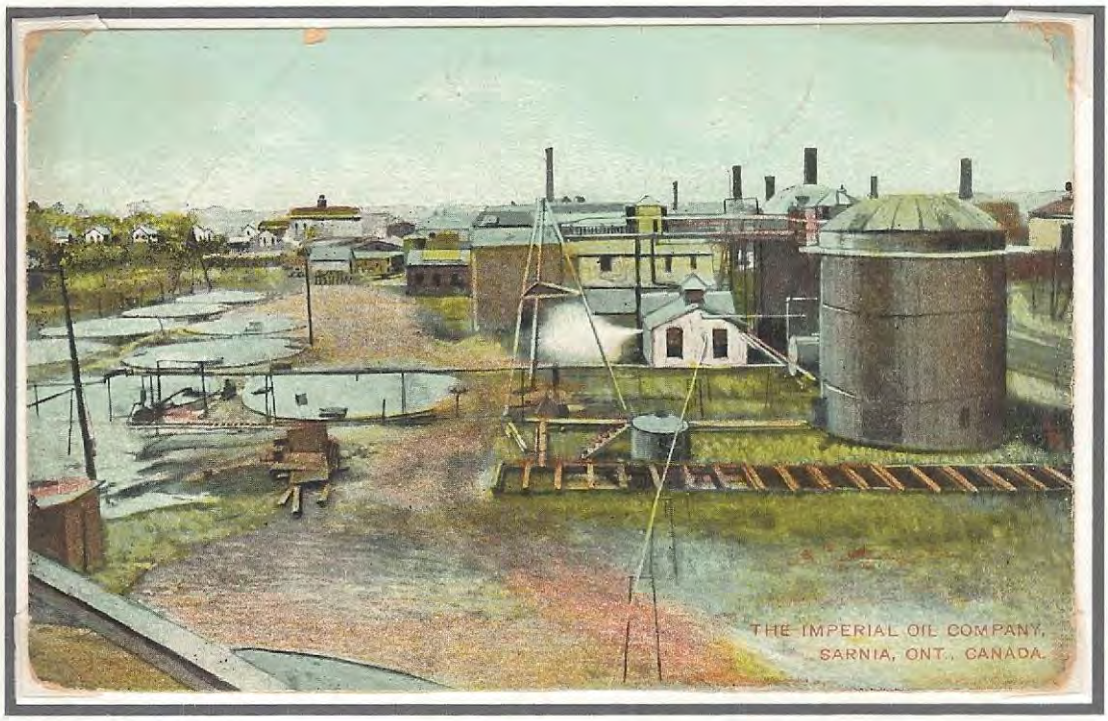
A POSTAL HISTORY OF IMPERIAL OIL

ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVE



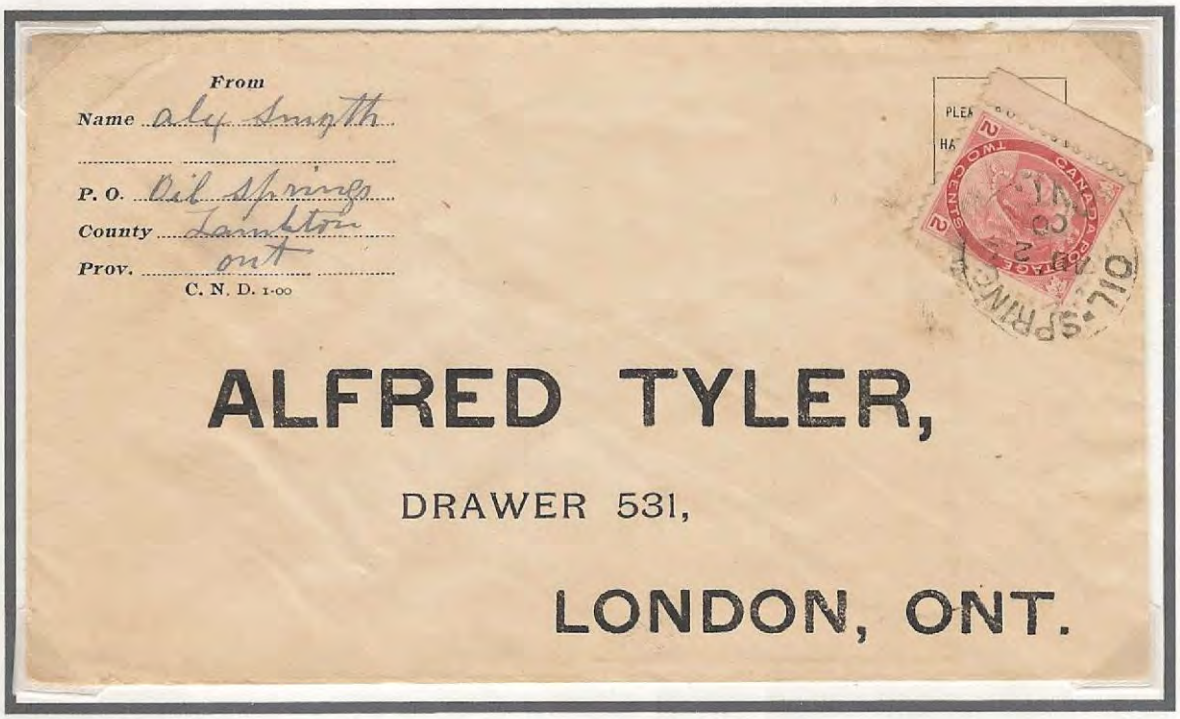
Imperial Oil Company, Sarnia, Ont., Canada
Postmarked Oct. 21, 1912

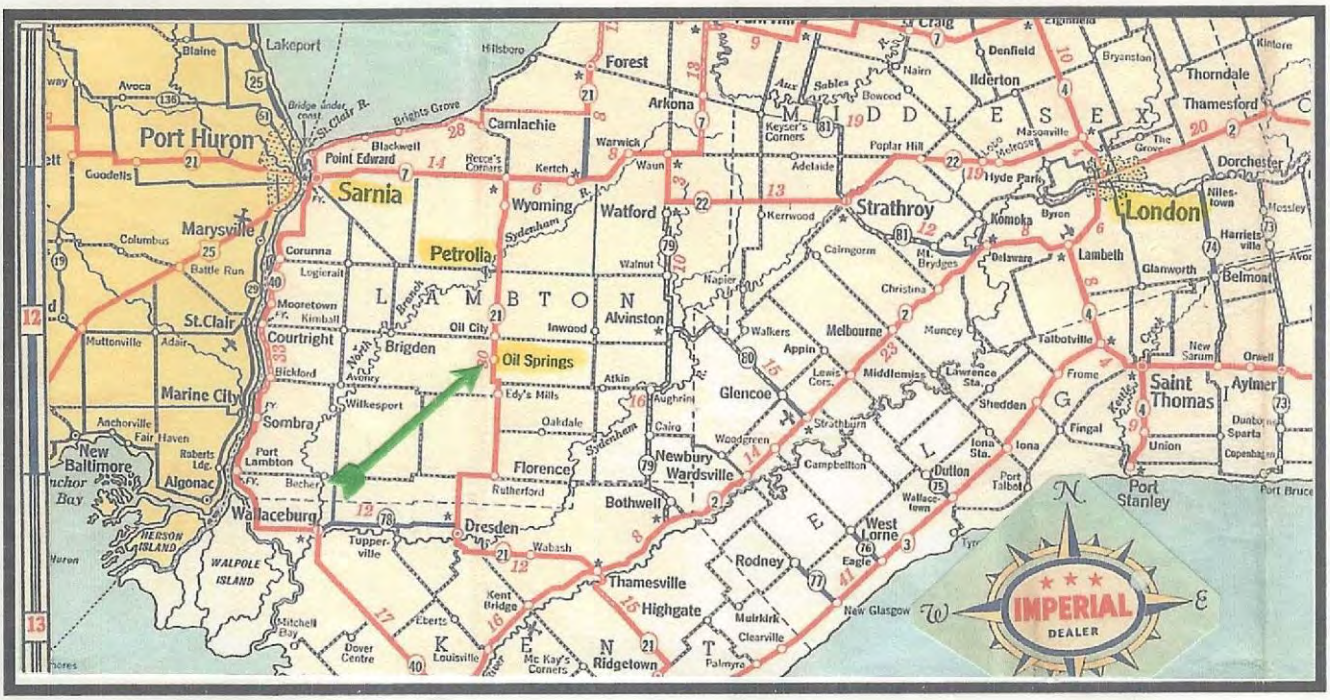
This exhibit presents a selection of Imperial Oil postal material from its first one hundred years.

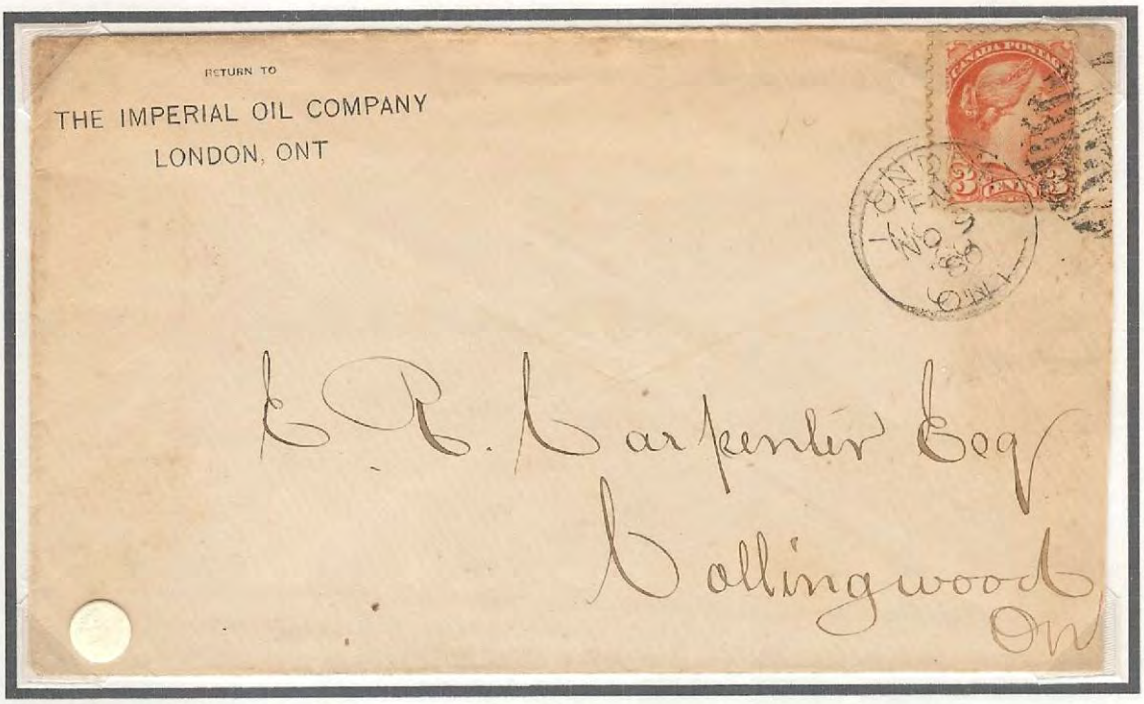
This exhibit will tell the story of Imperial Oil from an Atlantic Canada Perspective shown through its advertising covers, postcards, and allover advertising covers.

This exhibit will display all postally used material.

Although Imperial Oil was still nonexistent, in 1857 James Miller Williams spaded down fourteen feet and brought in the first oil well in North America. The cover below from Oil Springs Ontario reminds us of the place and the material for the emergence of Imperial Oil.



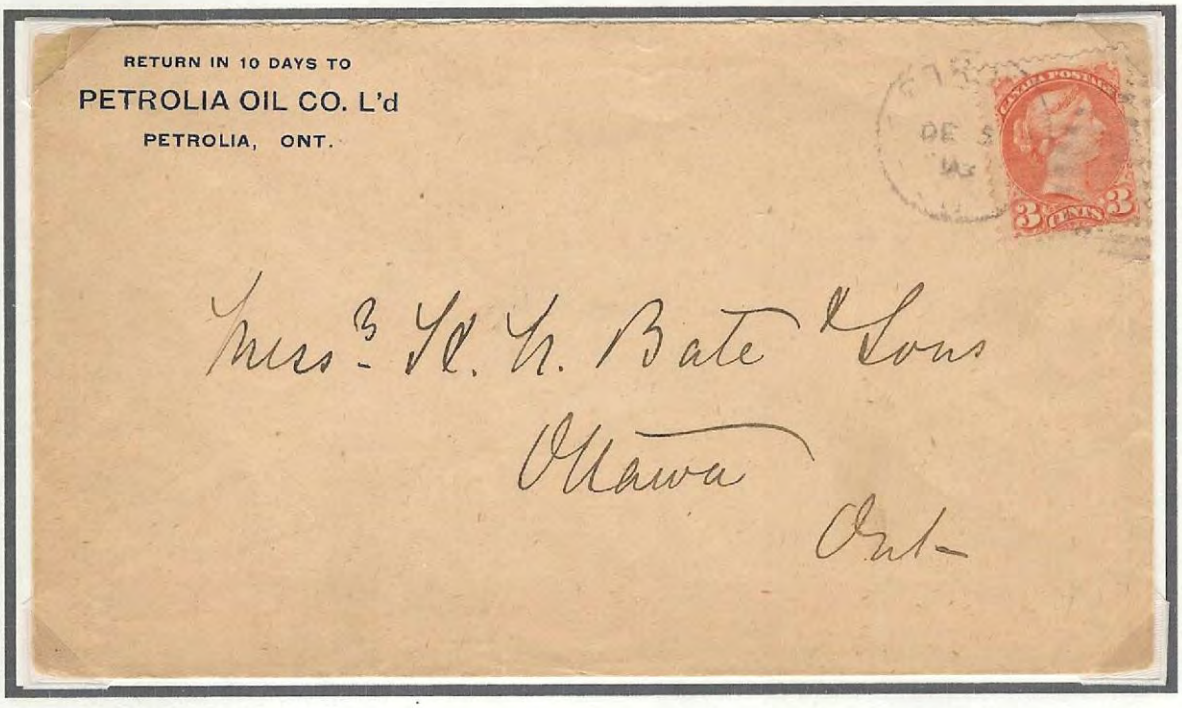




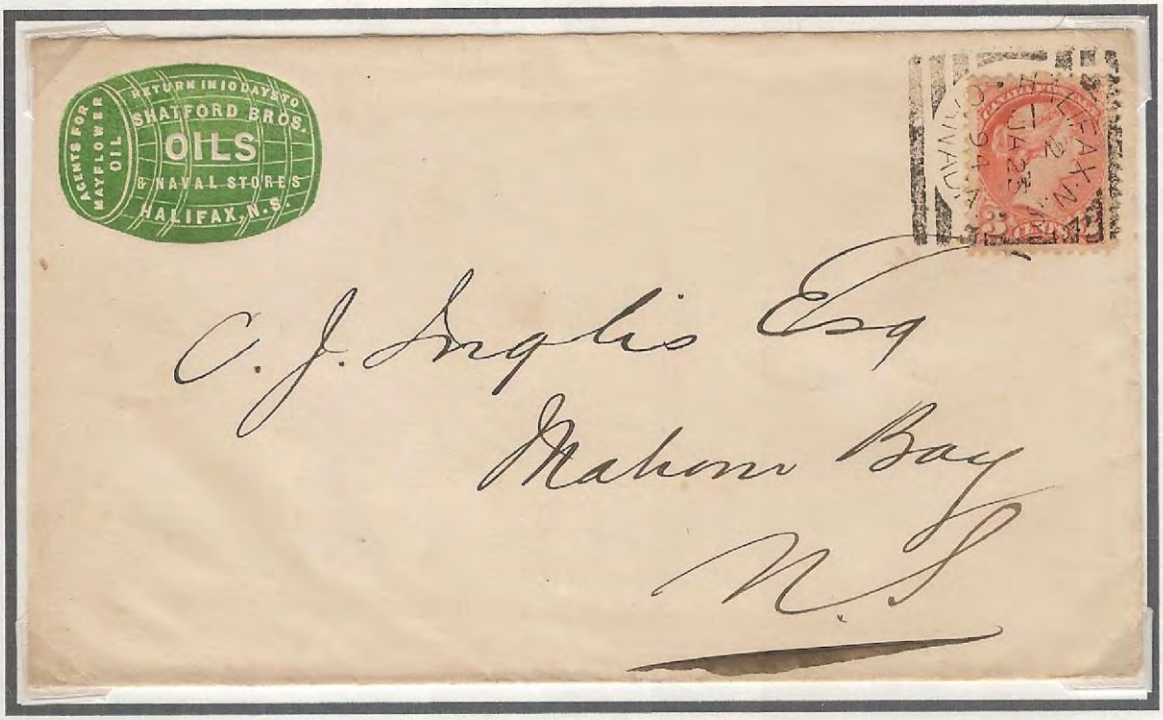
Imperial Oil was incorporated on September 8th, 1880 and became known as the Imperial Oil Company. Above is an early date November 9th, 1880, two months after its incorporation.

Lightning struck the London refinery in 1883. Rather than rebuild, they moved all its refinery to Petrolia.

Petrolia was the centre of Imperial Oil's wells. Below is a cover from Petrolia.



In 1885 the Shatford Bros., Sid almost 21, and Frank 18, set up Nova Scotia's first native oil business. Their base was Liverpool Wharf at the north end of Halifax Harbour. Shatford Bros. would later become part of Imperial Oil. Also in 1885, in Germany Carl Benz was experimenting with the world's first auto - a three wheel affair with chain drive.



In 1886 Imperial Oil, now six years old, opened a branch office in St. John, New Brunswick. The following covers are examples of corner address covers sent from the St. John office.

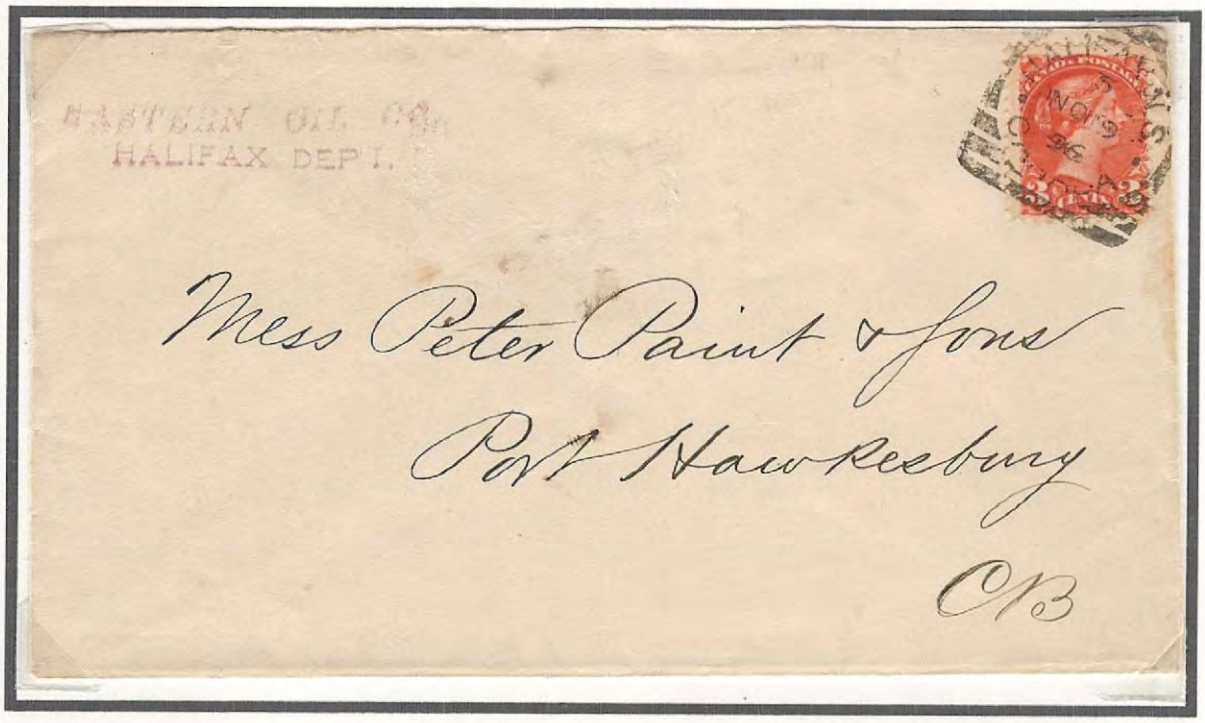
Also from the St. John office came various Advertising Covers. Before 1893, the barrel was the container used to ship various oil products, mostly kerosene and lubricants.

In September 1888 Joseph Bullock & Sons of New Brunswick chartered the Eastern Oil Company.

Above an early cover of Joseph Bullock, oil merchant before he chartered Eastern Oil Company.

Above a very late cover of Eastern Oil Company from St. John New Brunswick.

Eastern Oil Company also had offices in Moncton and Halifax. The following six covers reflect these branches and a selection of different advertising covers used. Eastern Oil Company will eventually become part of Imperial Oil.



Again, the barrel was an important symbol used on Advertising Covers for Eastern Oil. Shatford Bros., Eastern Oil Company and Imperial (to come later) all used the barrel on Advertising Covers.

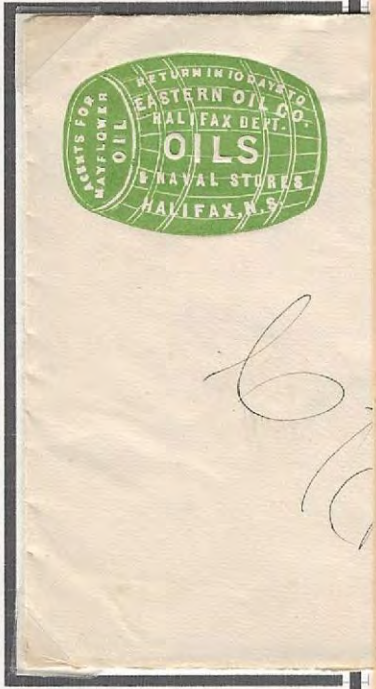
The barrel (used as an advertising symbol) was used to handle such oil products as kerosene. In Nova Scotia schooners brought it in 35 gallon wooden barrels and in cases of 2 five gallon cans. Then shipped it out by horse and wagon to every corner grocer and a wide range of customers.

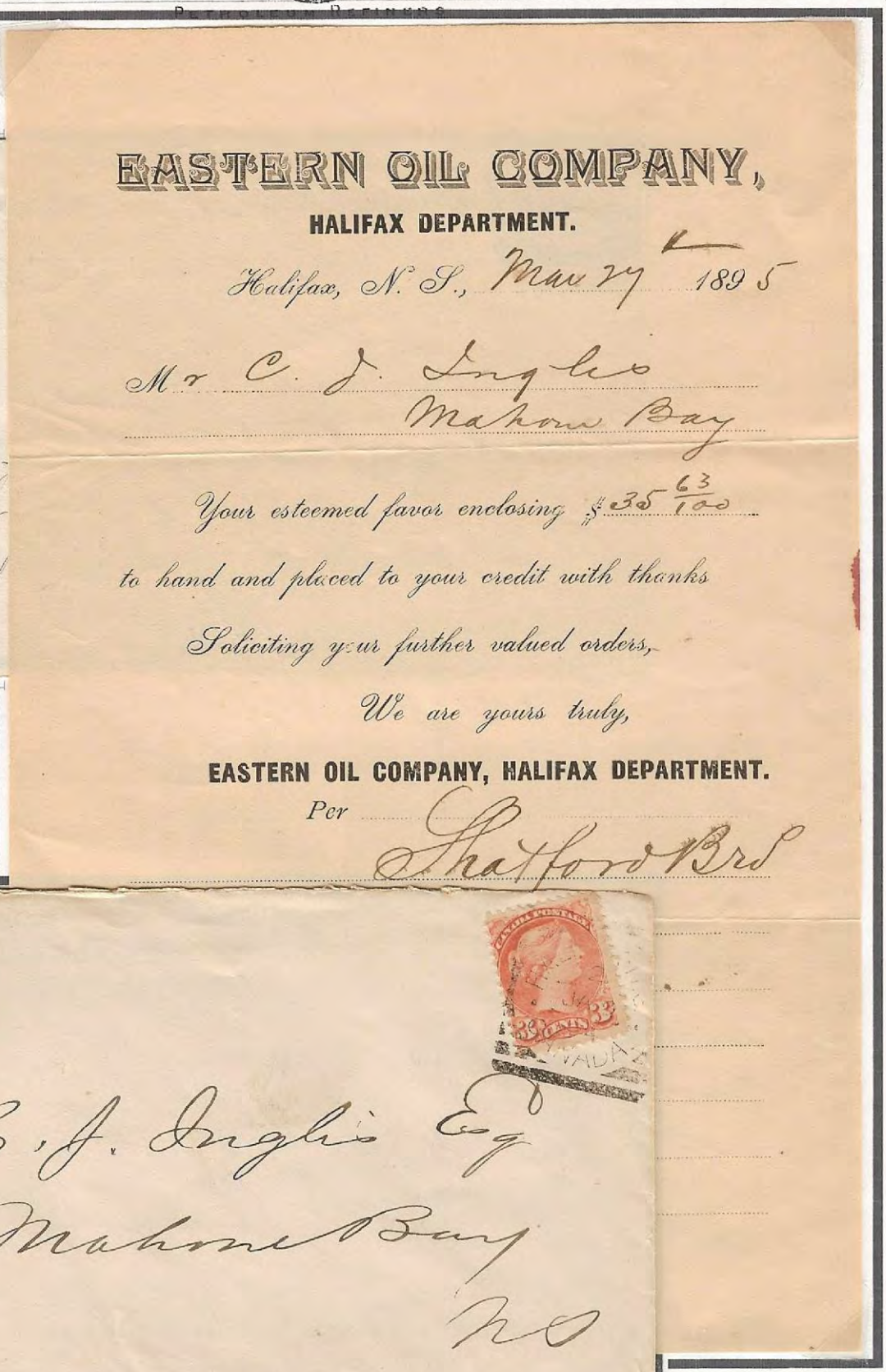
The rail tank car became a symbol on both Imperial Oil and Eastern Oil advertising covers after 1892. It was in 1893 that the ban was removed from transporting petroleum products by tank car. Shatford Bros. built a 80,000 gallon bulk storage tank on Kempt Road, Halifax.

For a decade success grew upon success. By 1993 Imperial Oil had twenty-three branches from Halifax to Victoria. With the ban removed on railway tank cars to transport oil, Imperial Oil had fifty tank cars ready to move product from coast to coast. Demand for storage tanks grew.

Later in 1898 the federal government permitted imports of oil in bulk by water and Imperial Oil promptly built a million-gallon tank, a barrel plant and a wharf at Africville on the Bedford Basin. Wooden barrels were still in use and the art of assembling them was practiced by six skilled coopers. The barrels were rolled down a long runway and into the holds of waiting schooners. The storage tank became an advertising symbol for Imperial covers.

Eastern Oil





EASTERN OIL COMPANY,

HALIFAX DEPARTMENT.

Halifax, N. S., Mar 29 1895

Mr C. J. Inglis
Mahone Bay

Your esteemed favor enclosing $35 63/100 to hand and placed to your credit with thanks

Soliciting your further valued orders,

We are yours truly,

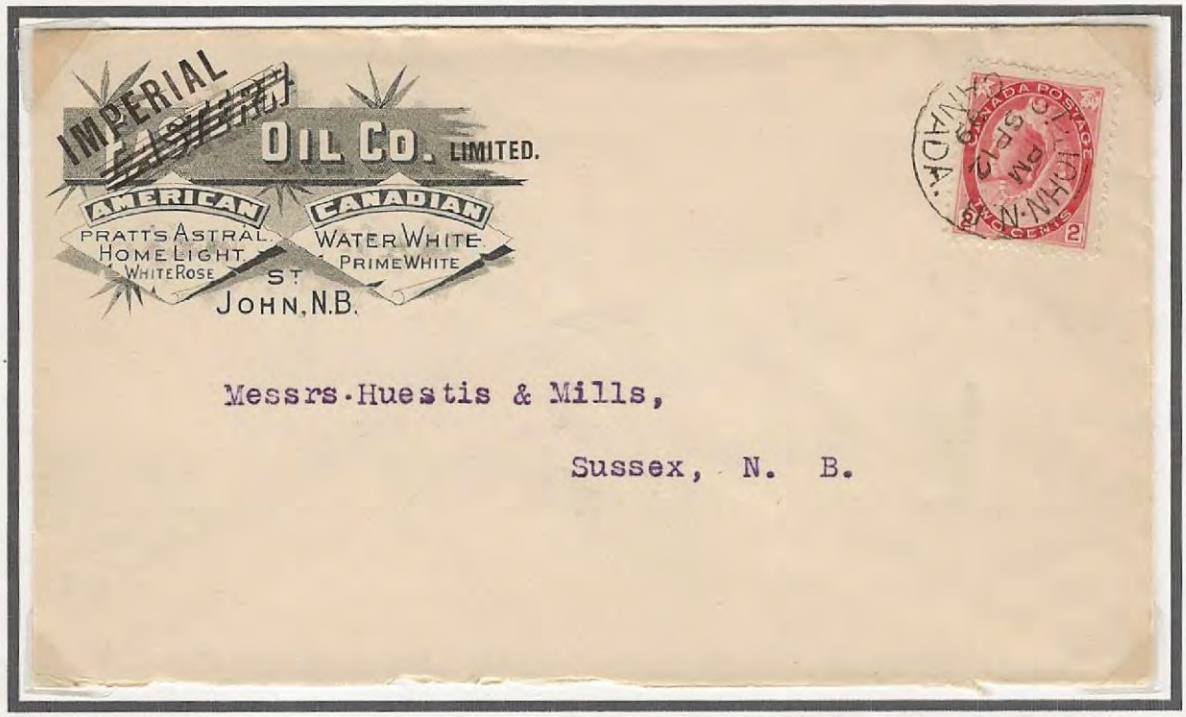
EASTERN OIL COMPANY, HALIFAX DEPARTMENT.

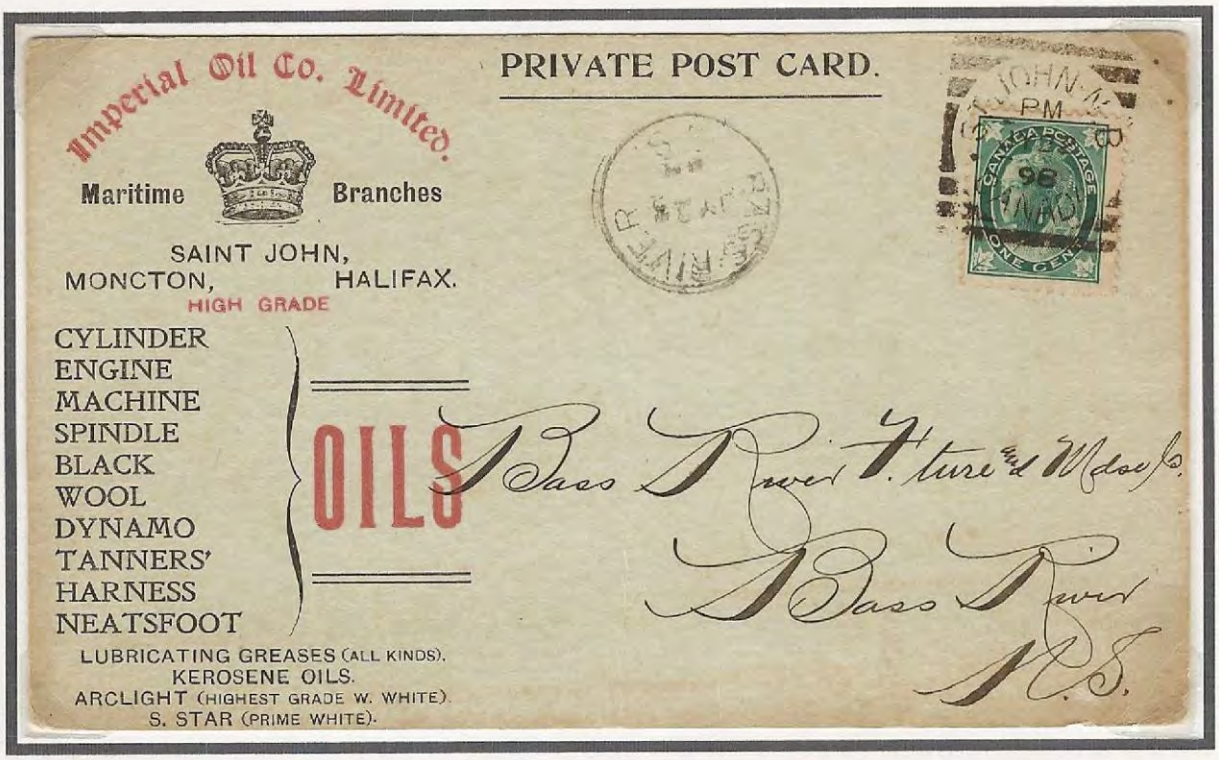
Per Shatford Bros

Shatford Bros.

In1894, to present a united front to their mutual rival Imperial Oil, Eastern Oil and Shatford Bros. merged their interest under the Eastern Oil Co. Note - receipt signed by the Shatford Bros. on Eastern Oil letterhead.

Despite the merger of the Bullock and Shatford companies, Imperial steadily grew stronger in the Maritimes and in 1898, the two rivals - Imperial and Eastern - joined forces. Eastern Oil thus became the Maritime wing of Imperial with the Shatfords in Nova Scotia and the Bullocks in New Brunswick. Below are two Eastern Oil advertising covers that have been reworked to be used as Imperial Oil Co., Ltd.

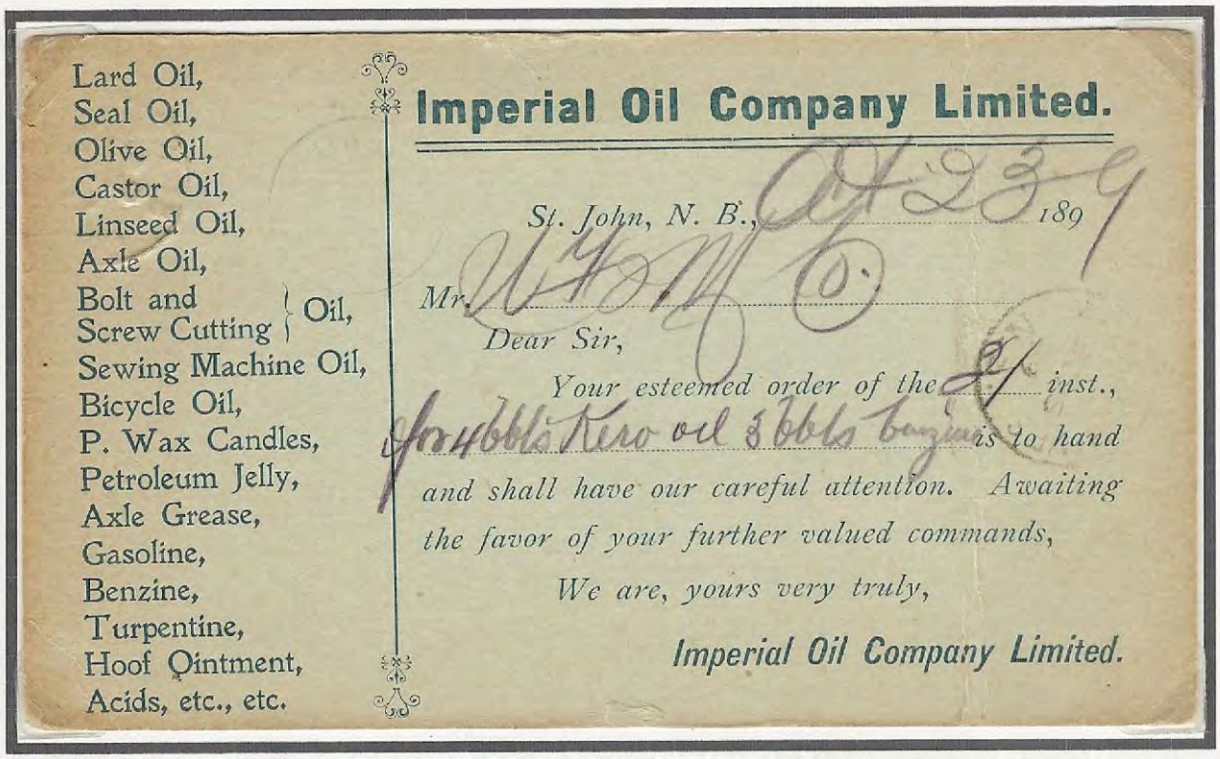




Imperial Oil Private Post Cards list the many products sold at the time of the merger with Eastern Oil in 1898. Eastern Oil being a merger of the Bullock and Shatford families of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Although gasoline is listed as a product for sale it was the oils, greases and kerosene that were so important. In five years there would still be only 178 cars in Canada.

The bottom post card is like the back of the top post card of 1898.



IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY LIMITED

PETROLEUM REFINERS

Below an Imperial Oil invoice showing successors to Eastern Oil Co. The Canada Postcard shows Shatford Bros. as managers. Eastern Oil (the Bullocks) and Shatford's are now Imperial Oil.

OFFICE—HEAD LIVERPOOL WHARF. OIL TANK STATION, BEDFORD BASIN.

STATEMENT.

Halifax, N. S., JUL 31 1899

E. J. Ingals

In Account with *Offshore Bay.*

IMPERIAL OIL CO., Limited.

(SUCCESSORS TO EASTERN OIL CO.)

HALIFAX DEPARTMENT.

FOLIO .....

Terms

Interest charged on accounts not paid when due.
All Bills payable in Halifax.

May 26	To Acct. Rendered,	
	" Goods per Bill,	2 93

Dear Sir;
We will consider it your wish that
we make draft for above. AUG. 17. 1899
unless we have your kind remittance
before

TH

If abo

Halifax, N. S., June 29th 1906

Dear Sirs:—

We acknowledge receipt through our representative of your esteemed order dated June 25/06 and we will endeavor to fill same to your satisfaction.

Awaiting your further valued favors.

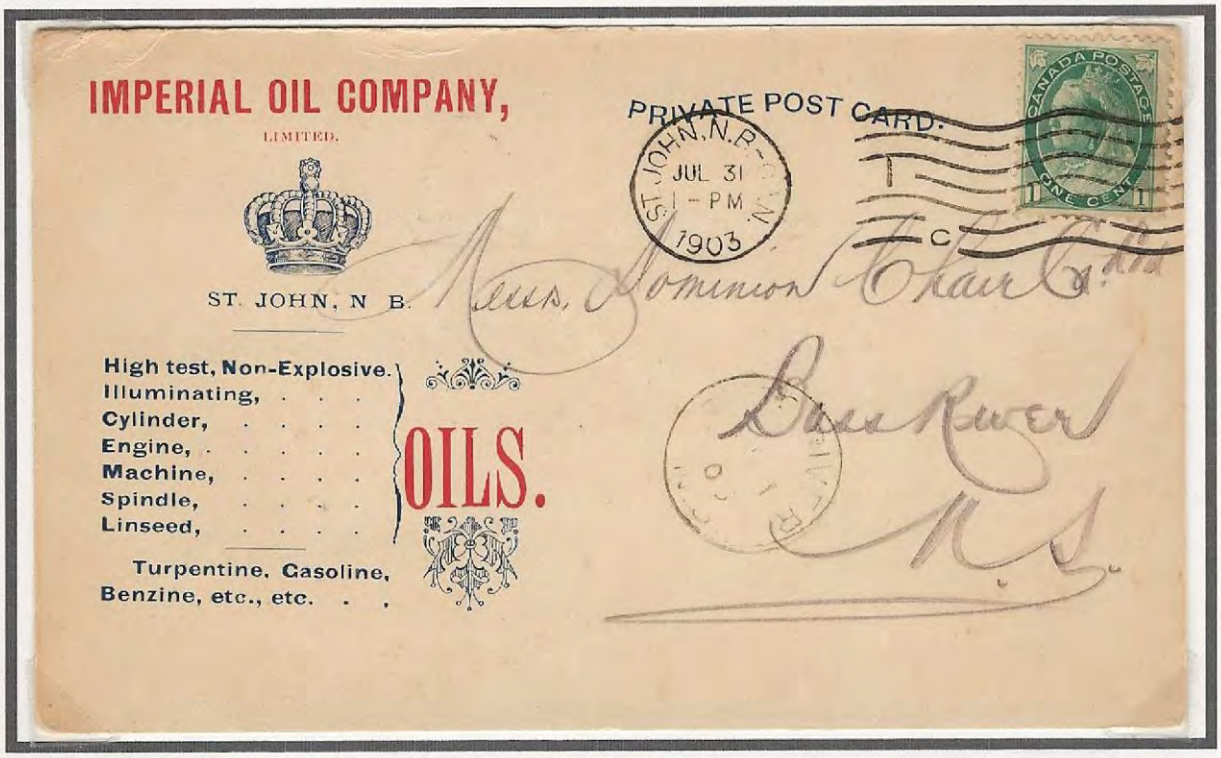
Yours truly,

The IMPERIAL OIL CO., Limited,

SHATFORD BROS., Managers.

After the merger in 1898, along with Shatford Bros. and Eastern Oil now Imperial Oil is using the barrel for its ad covers. Later letters with windows were added. Below a plain address corner cover.

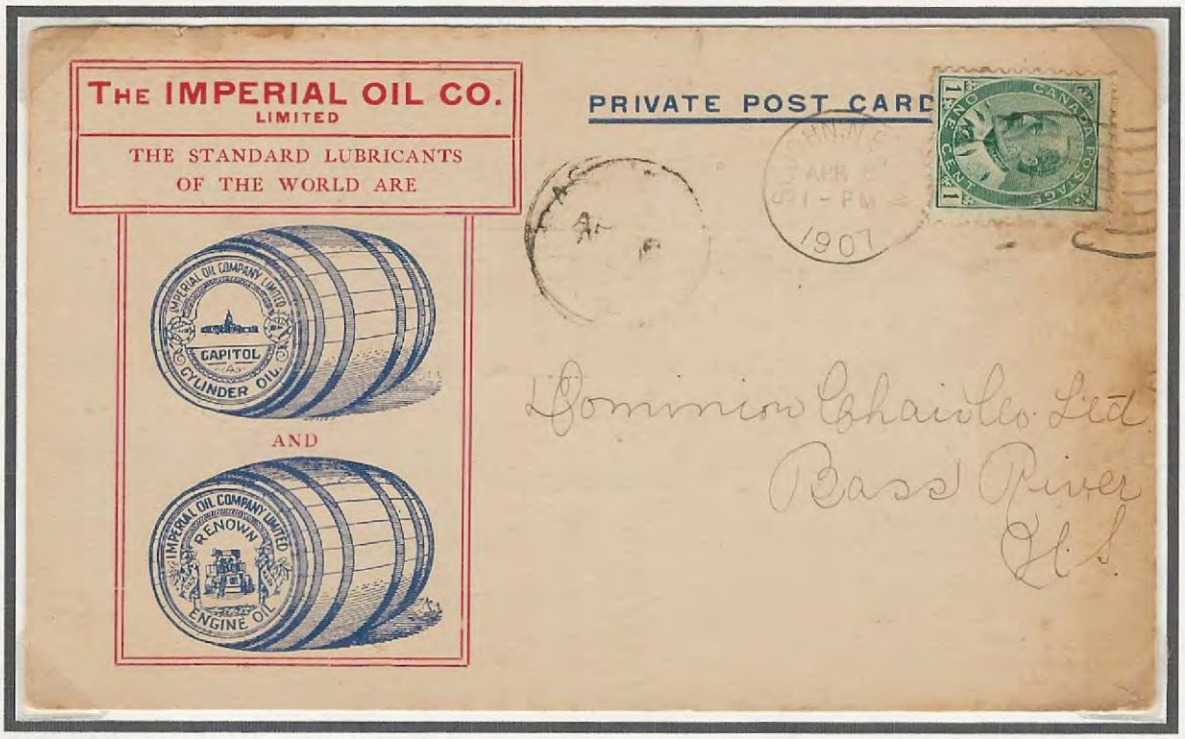
These two Private Post Cards used by Imperial Oil and the following two pages show a variety of Private Post Cards used by Imperial.



The above Private Postcard of 1903 promotes mainly oils. In later years as shown in the bottom card Imperial is advertising the Rayo Lamp, moving toward selling the goods that used their products. The Rayo Lamp was one of the most popular table lamps of the century.

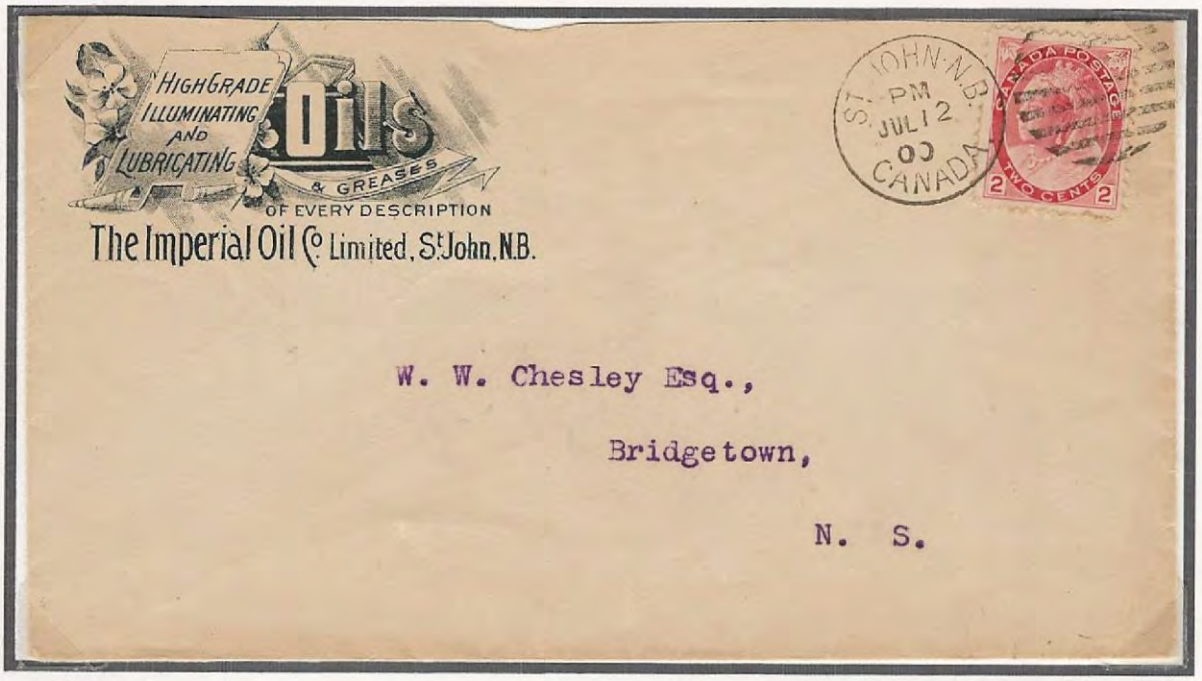
The Barrel appears again on the Imperial Oil Co., Limited Private Post Cards promoting, of course, the standard lubricants of the world, cylinder oil and engine oil.

Promotion of oil and the use of the barrel ad were used on Private Post Cards for at least the first decade in the twentieth century. Gasoline is yet to arrive at its potential.



Two advertising covers used by Eastern Oil continued to be used by Imperial Oil after 1898 when Eastern Oil merged with Imperial Oil.

The bottom cover demonstrates that it was still used until 1911. During this time, the window envelope became more commonly used in company correspondence.

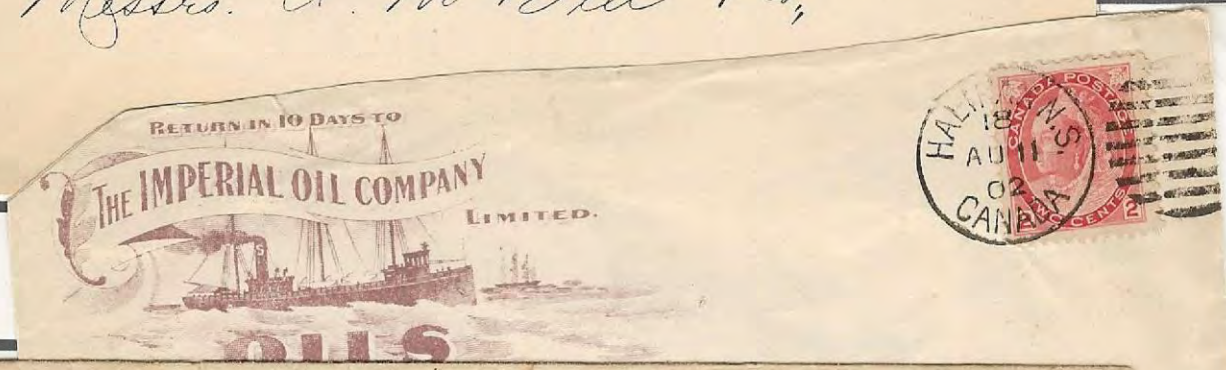


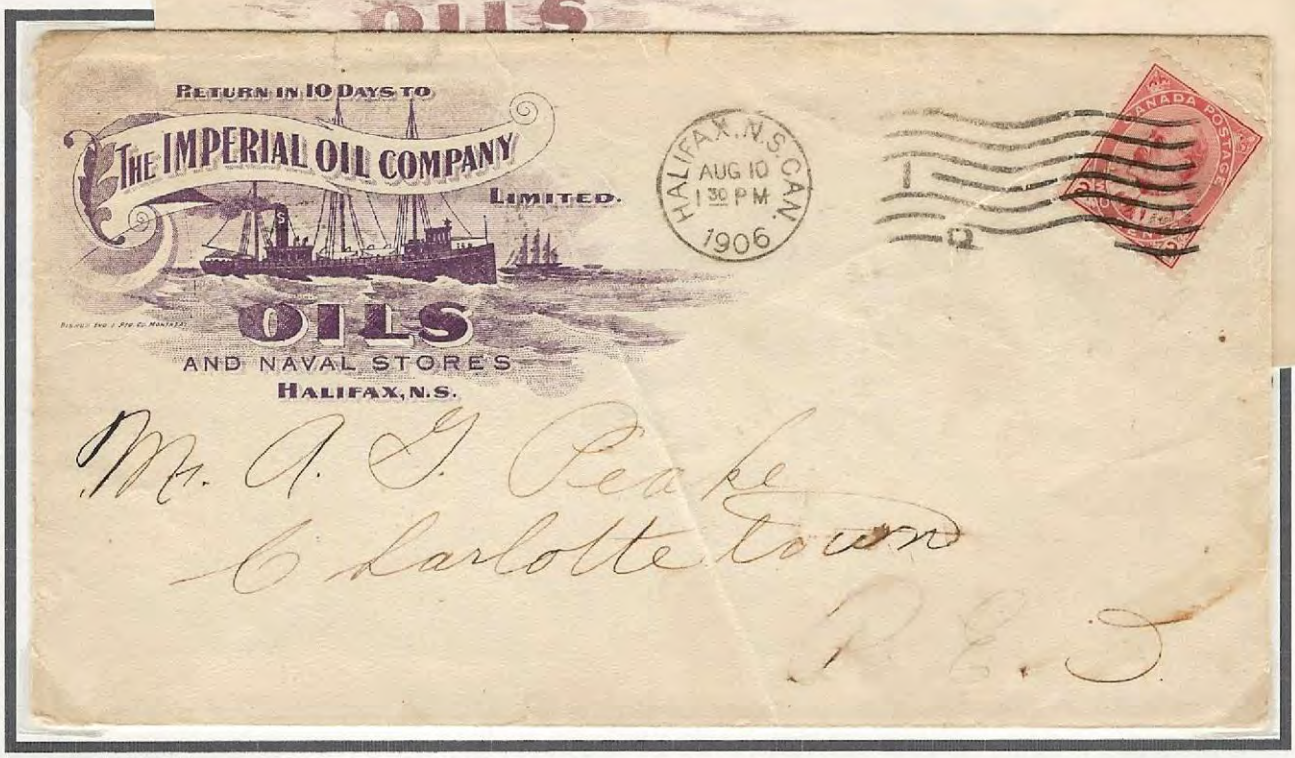
In 1898 the use of bulk transport by steamer was made legal. The first bulk cargo of oil to arrive at any Canadian port came into the new Imperial dock at Bedford Basin aboard the tank steamer Maverick from Bayonne, N. J., in 1899. Two trips later the Maverick was discharging its cargo when a brass elbow on the pipe line to shore split open. Kerosene gushed out, ran down into the engine room and caught fire. The burning ship was cut loose, drifted out into the harbour, rolled over and sank.

"MAVERICK", the vessel pictured on the above cover, was built in 1890 by the Columbian Dry Dock Company of Baltimore, Maryland. The Maverick was a steel-screw vessel, rigged as a three-masted schooner and carried petroleum in bulk; 1561 tons gross, 240 feet long, 36 feet wide; 17 foot draught and powered by a triple expansion engine. The vessel was owned by Standard Oil.

THE IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY LIMITED

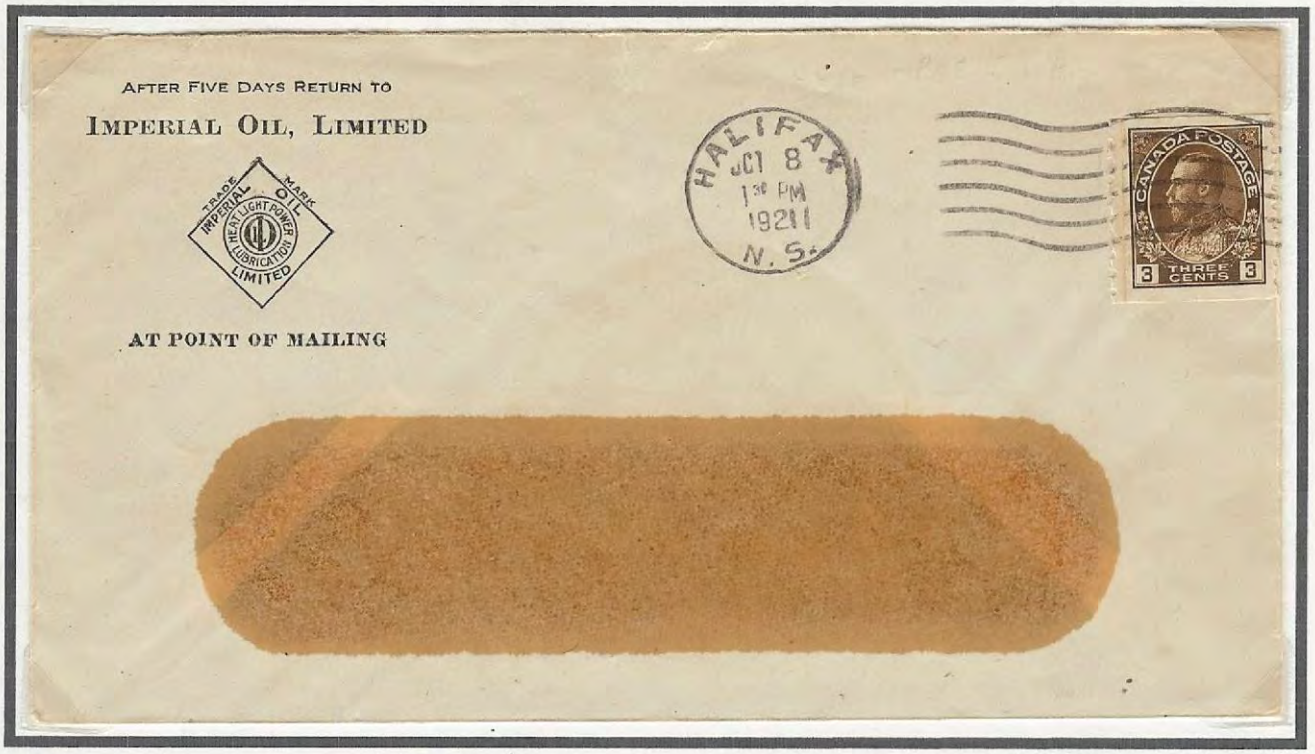
PETROLEUM REFINERS





Two other common covers used by Imperial Oil, mostly used for monthly statements. Both are window envelopes and interesting to note two different methods used to produce the window envelope.

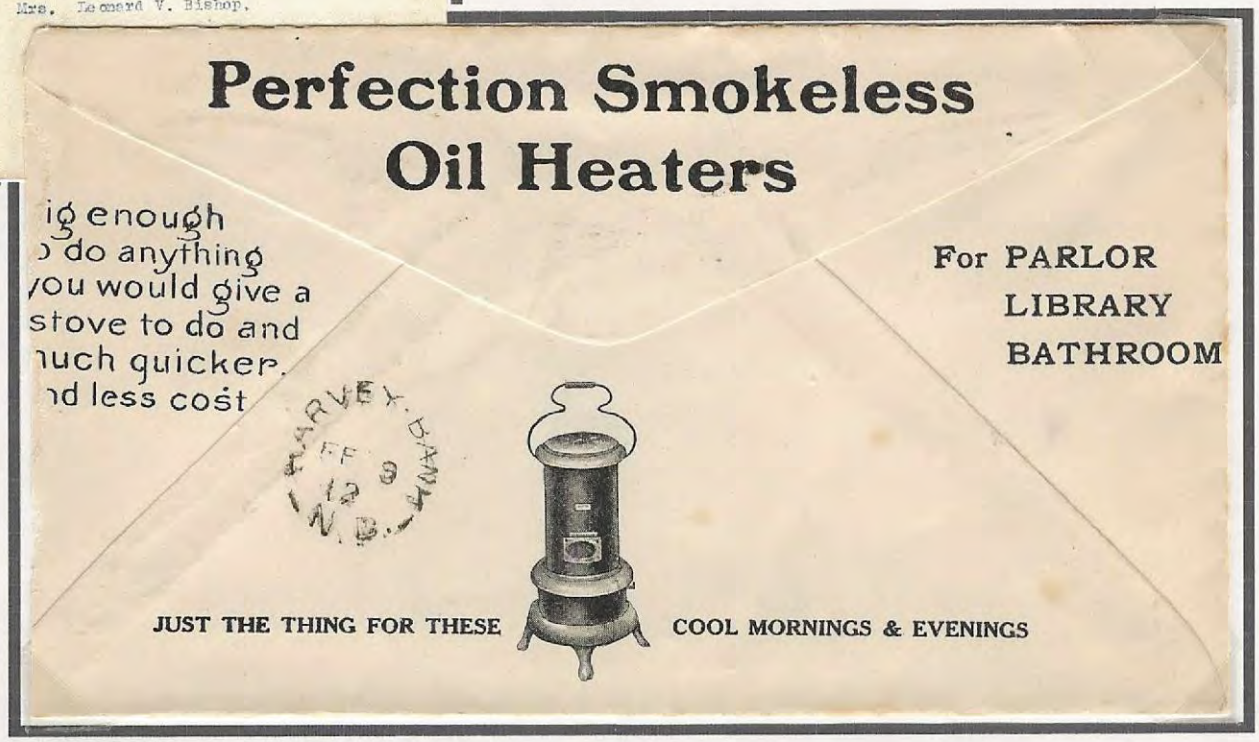
Note the bottom cover has a paste up coil.

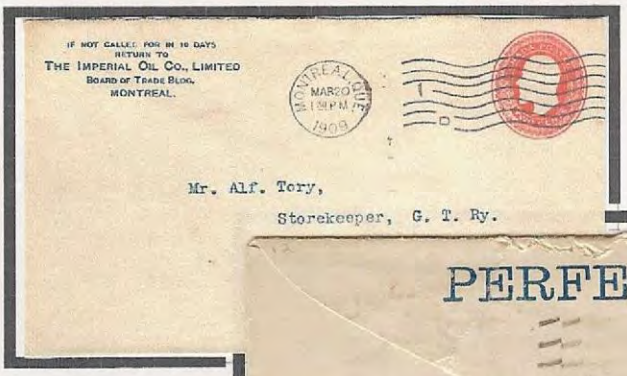


Imperial Oil advertising cover for early cook stove, 1911.

Imperial Oil advertising cover for Rayo Lamps, one of most popular of the century. In 1911, a dozen cost $48.00.

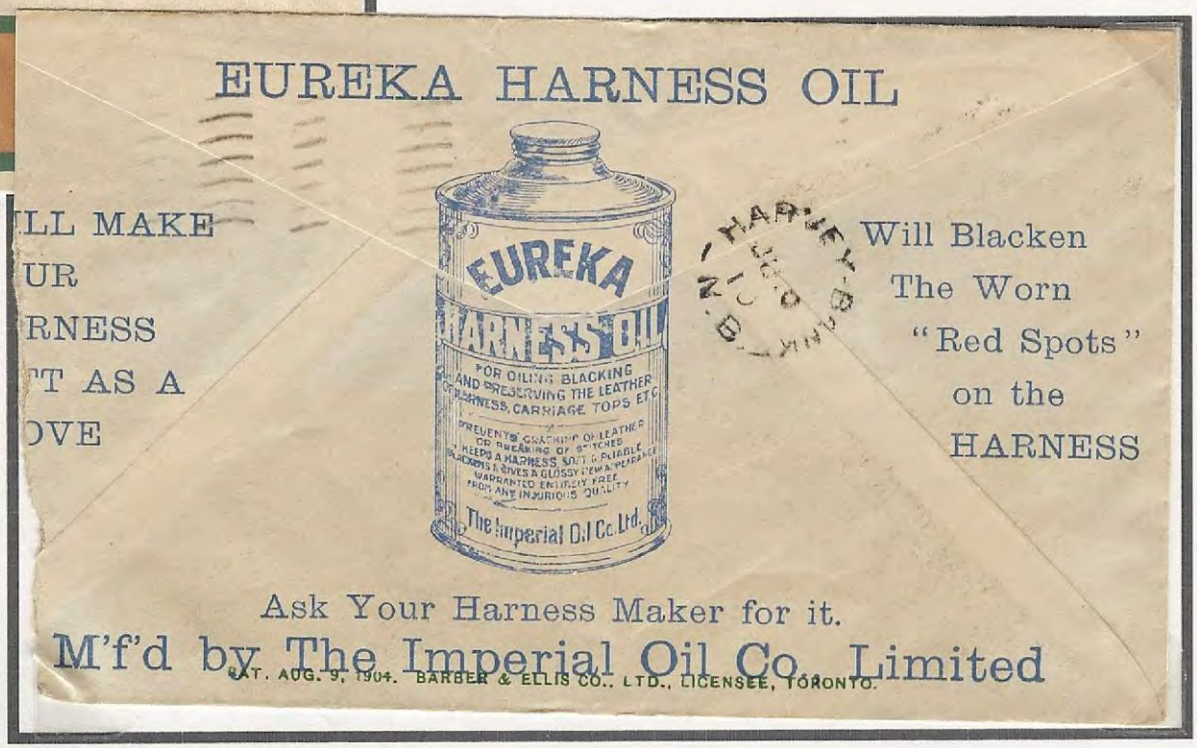
By 1918 there were three million of these Perfection Oil Heaters advertised by Imperial Oil in use.





The Perfection Heaters that were advertised by Imperial Oil all used #1 Kerosene.

Sears Roebuck sold Imperial Oil's Eureka Harness Oil in 1897 for $.25 for a pint can.



Imperial Oil's Mica Axle Grease was at its peak sales in 1883 - 1910.

Imperial Oil's Mica Axle Grease is a combination of solid lubricant and ground or pulverized mica - hence its name.

Kerosene and Mica Axle Grease were the initial products of Imperial Oil.

Two all over advertising covers used by Imperial oil.

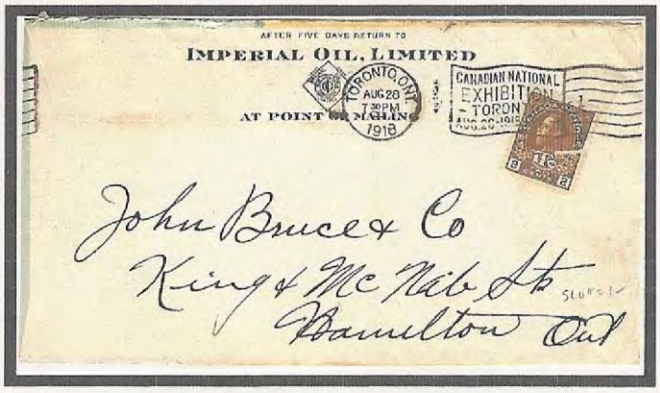
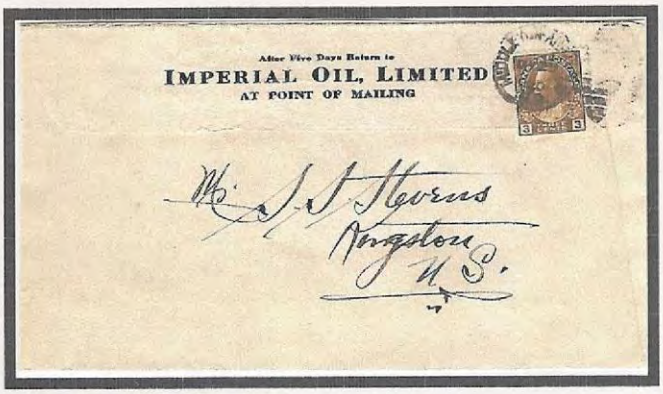


Photo copy of the front of cover below.

Photo copy of the front of cover above.

Two all over advertising covers - OIL HEATERS - used by Imperial Oil.



Photocopy of the front of the cover below.

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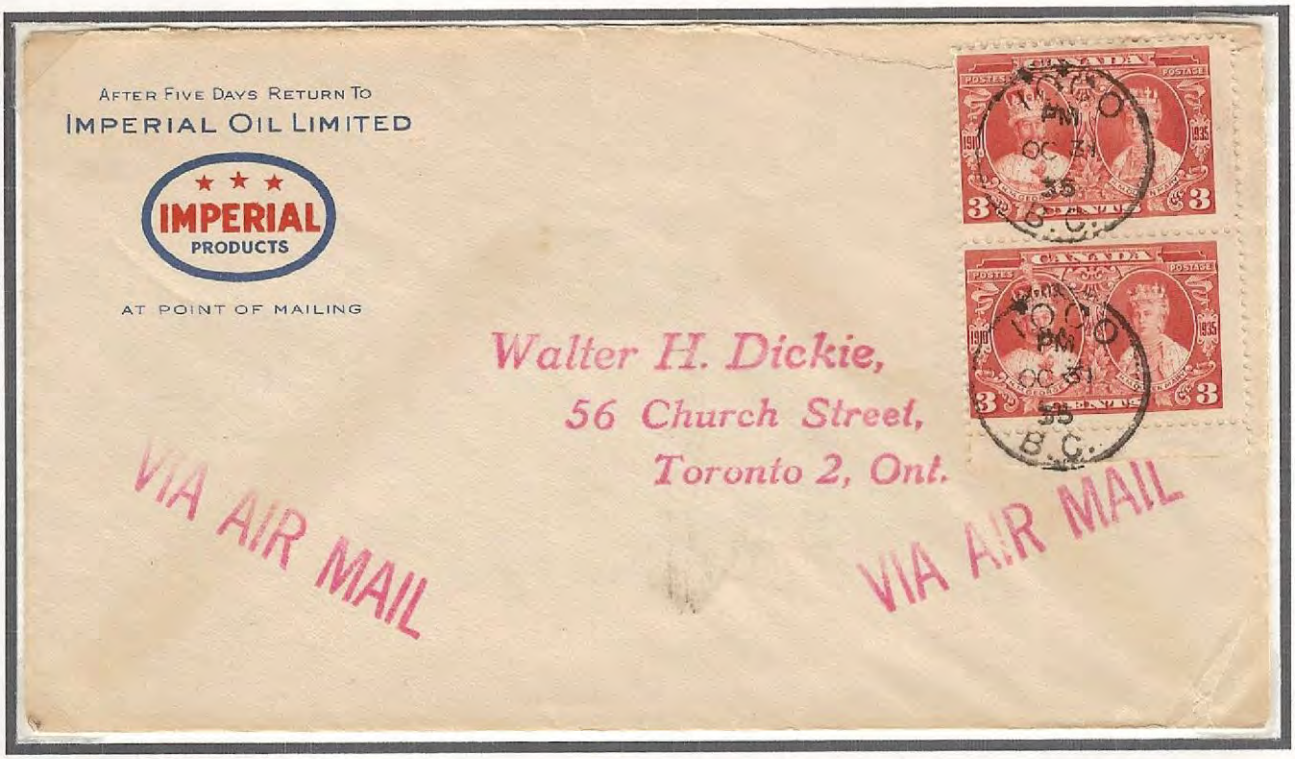
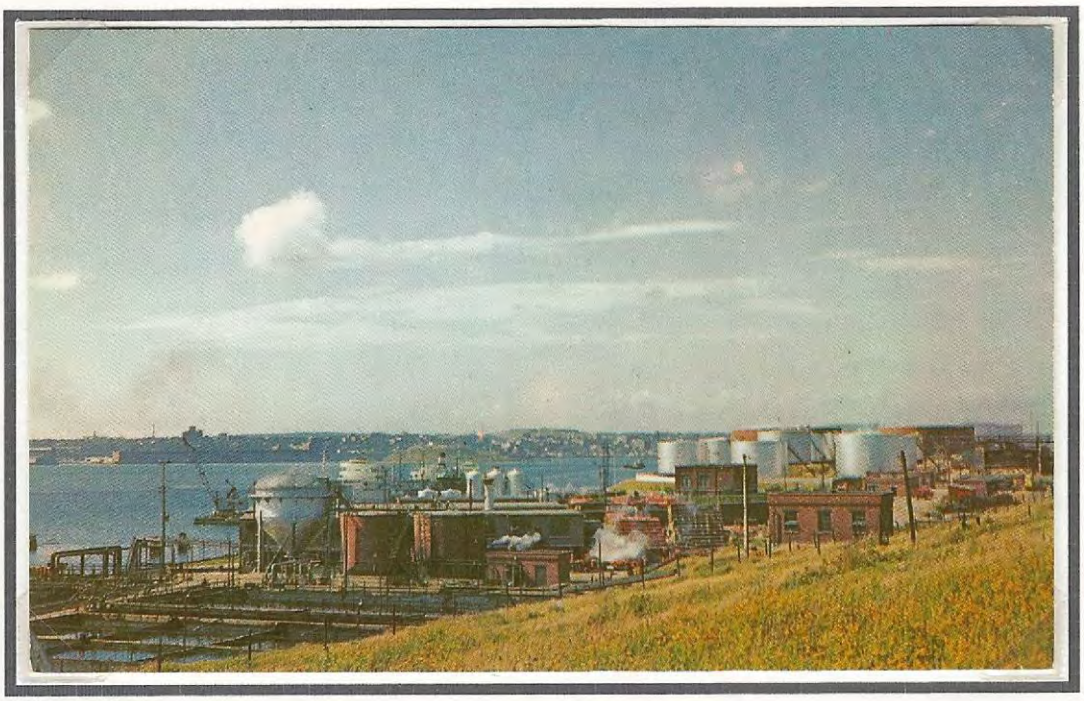


Above Imperial Oil Cover postmarked IOCO. Imperial Oil built British Columbia's first and the company's second refinery on Burrard Inlet. The place became known as IOCO the abbreviation of Imperial Oil Co.



Above a postcard of the Imperial Oil Co. refinery, Imperoyal Dartmouth, N. S. that went "on stream" in 1918. One of the largest oil refineries in Canada until it was dismantled.

In 1915 Imperial Oil formally established offices in St. John's. By 1917 the first tankage was erected in St. John's and the S.S. IOCOLITE arrived in that year with the first cargo.

In 1918 Newfoundland was set apart as a separate division, with headquarters at St. John's and by 1933 petroleum product sales had reached 100,000 barrels a year.

The postcards below picture two of Imperial Oil's Three Star dealers in both Digby and Kingston, Nova Scotia.

It was Imperial's Vancouver manager, C. M. Rolston, who started Canada's first Service Station in 1907 outside the warehouse at Smythe and Crombie Streets. A one room metal shack facing the street, a length of garden hose and a red sixty litre water tank full of gasoline comprised the first Service Station.

Kingston, N. S.

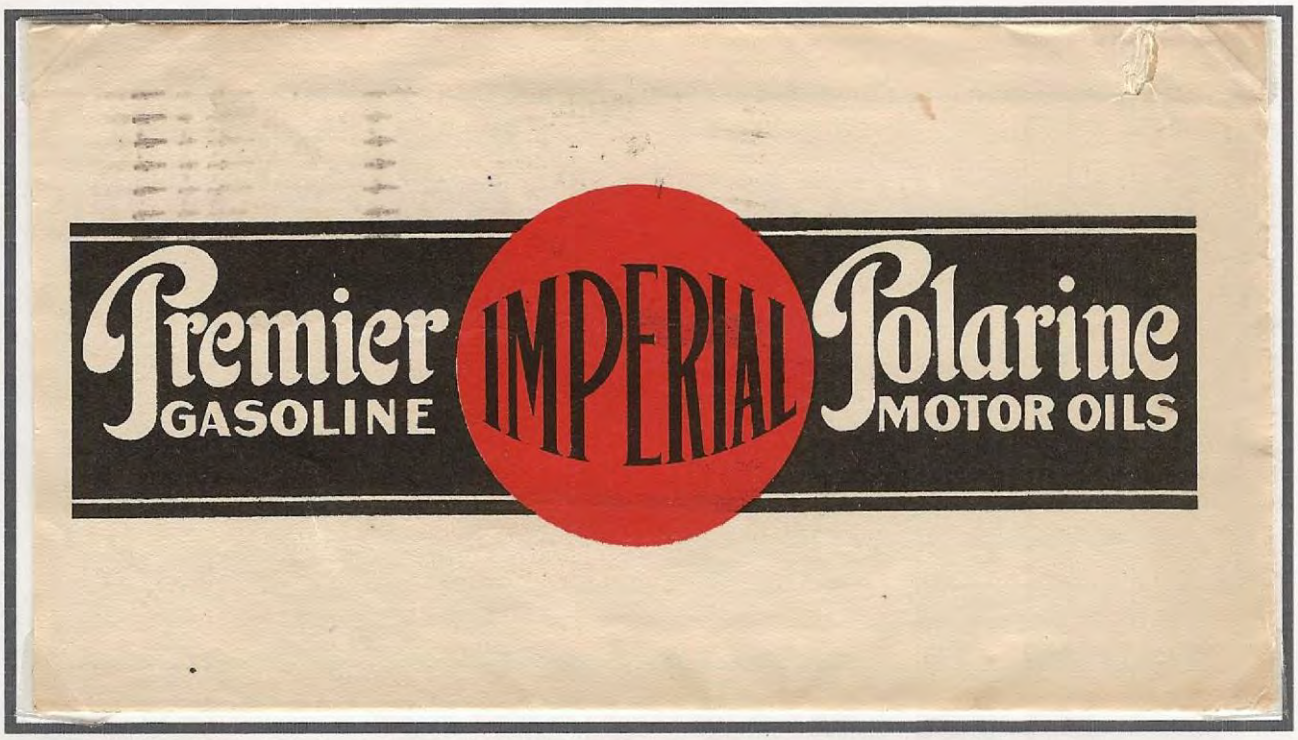
Montclare Service Station, P. H. Armstrong, Prop., Digby, Nova Scotia

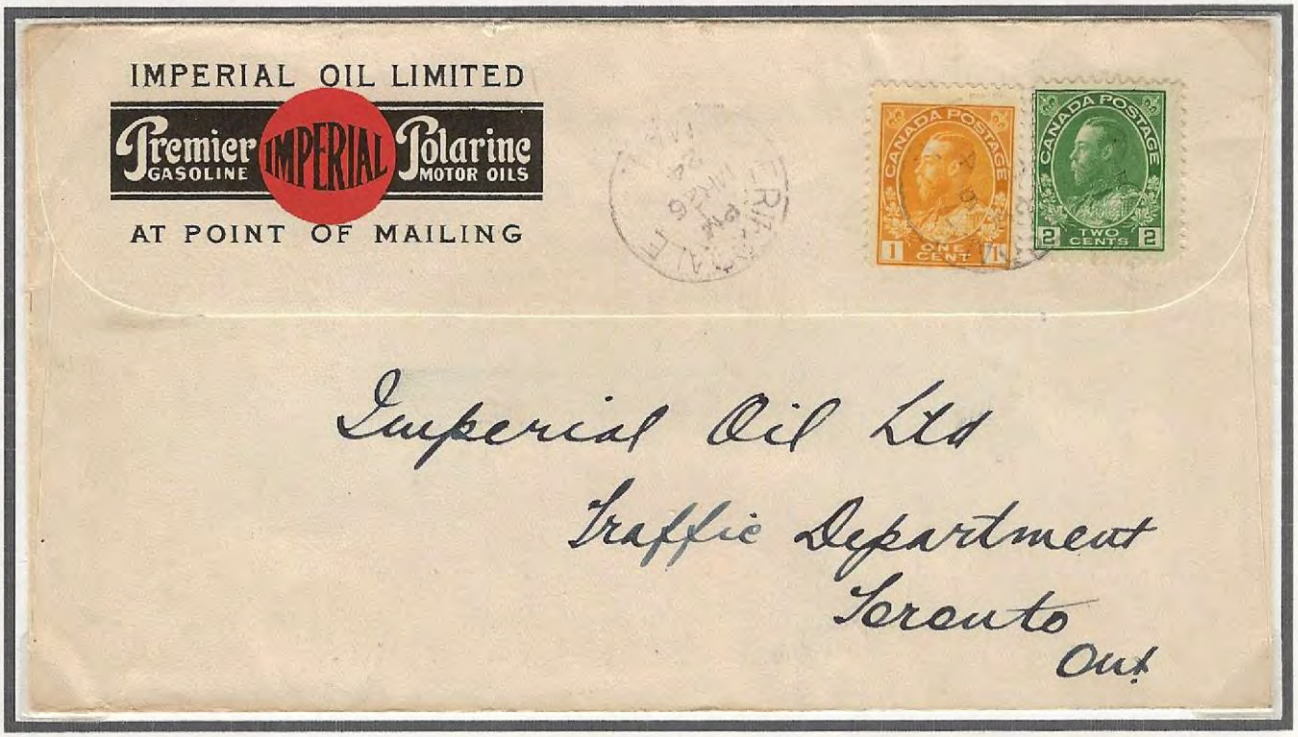
This All Over Advertising Cover of 1920 depicts the beginnings of the love affair of the car.

This 1922 cover makes the appeal for buying Imperial's products - Polarine Motor oil and Premier Gasoline.

These covers of 1918 and 1920 infer that Polarine Oils insure a smooth drive in all weather. However on Apr. 15, 1923, one

Halifax newspaper called the day "delightful driving weather". Although the catch phrase for the day was "keep to the right", Polarine alone does not insure a smooth ride.

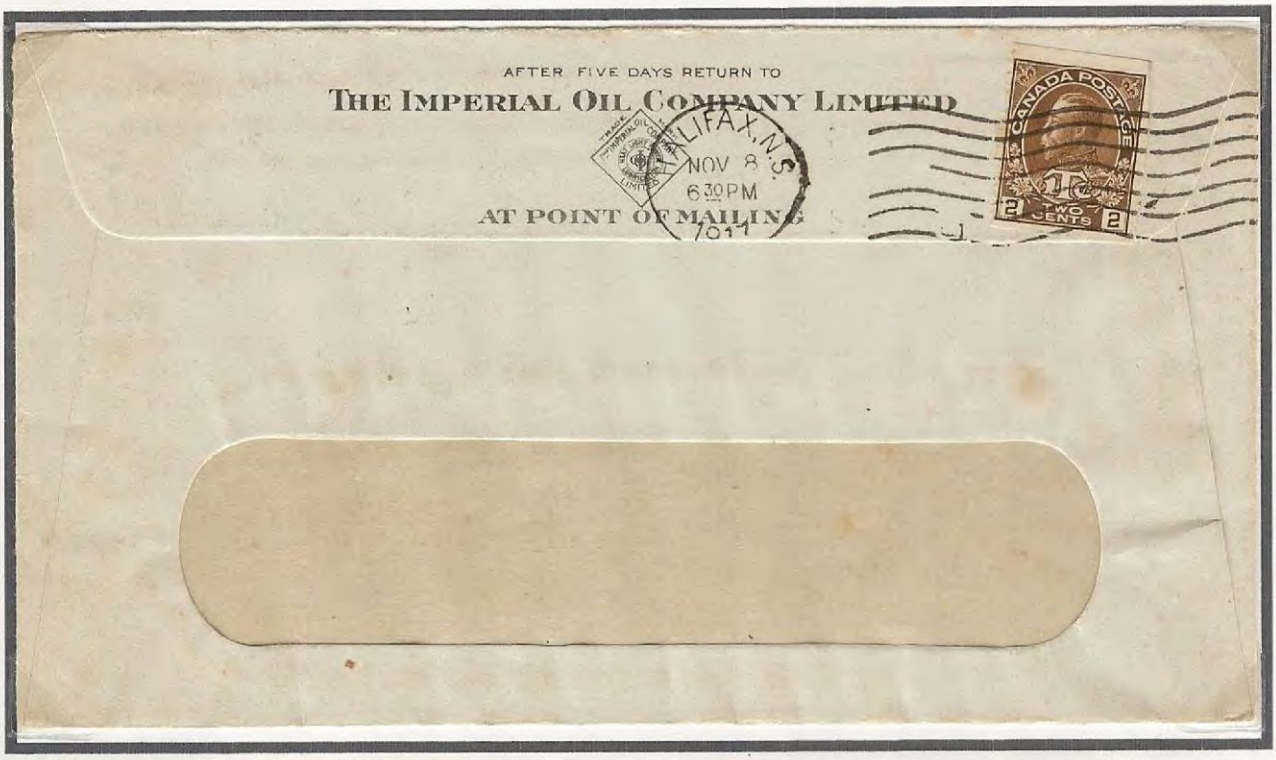




Above are two identical covers, one is showing the back and one is showing the front.

Polarine Motor Oil was developed in 1907 in a refinery in San Francisco. At that time, it was also known as Zerolene.

In 1917 the Tanker Polarine was built in the Burrard Dry Dock in Vancouver, British Columbia.

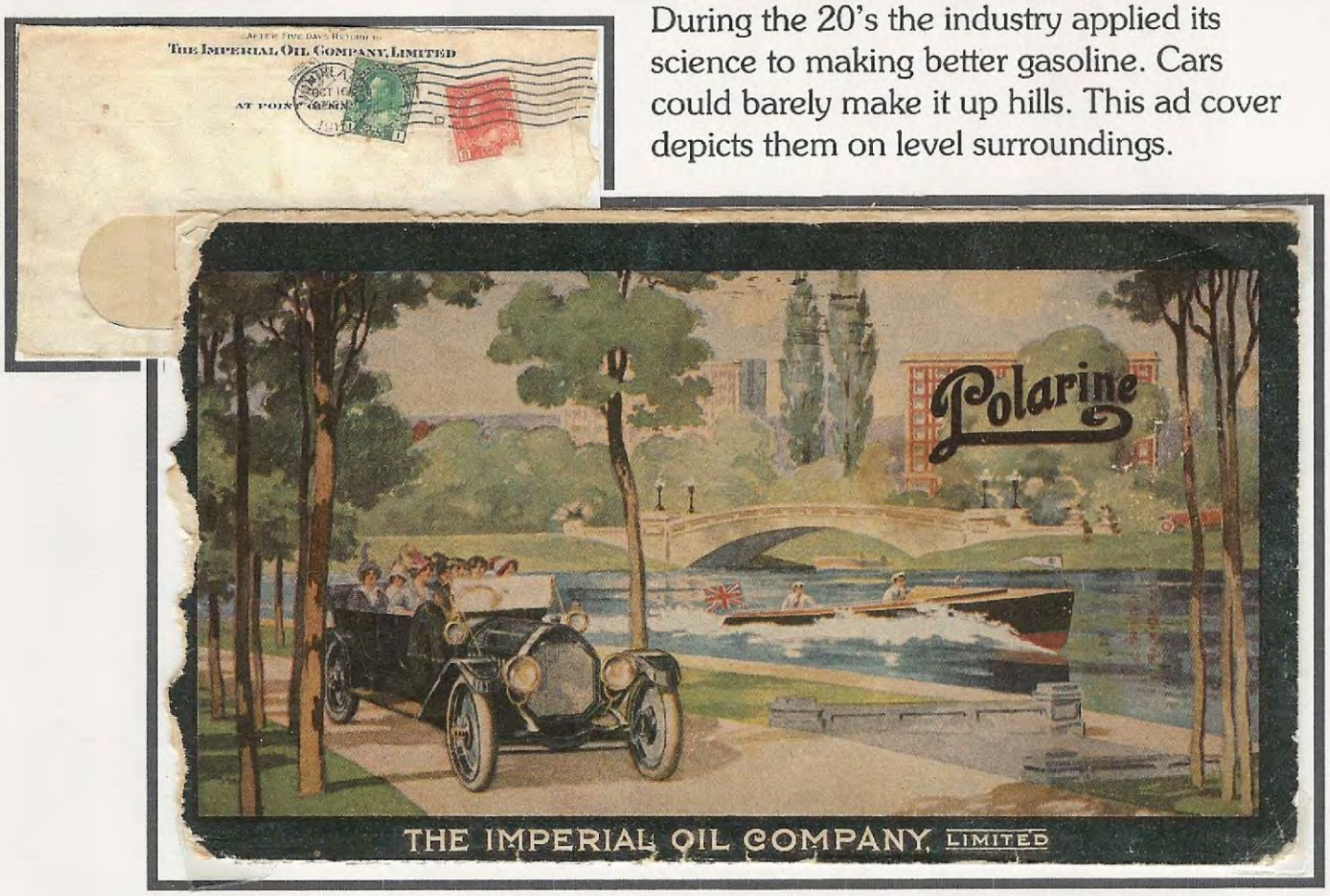


The two covers above are the same, one shows the front, the other the back.

By 1910 there were 5,890 cars in all of Canada. However, Imperial Oil began using these all over advertising covers showing the joy of the automobile and their Polarine Oils.

It is interesting to note the car is leading in the picture, perhaps implying that the car is the future mode of transportation and not the boat.

By 1920 there were 251,945 motor cars in Canada, more than 4 times as many as 1915. Speeds limits increase to 30m.p.h.



During the 20's the industry applied its science to making better gasoline. Cars could barely make it up hills. This ad cover depicts them on level surroundings.

Only in the 30's would steep hills become less of a problem.

Below is a common envelope used for monthly statements by the Imperial Oil Co. in the early 20's. Prior envelopes used a black outer rim.

Even by 1925 with 641000 cars in Canada, motoring was still an ordeal. Below is a cover from 1926, one year later.

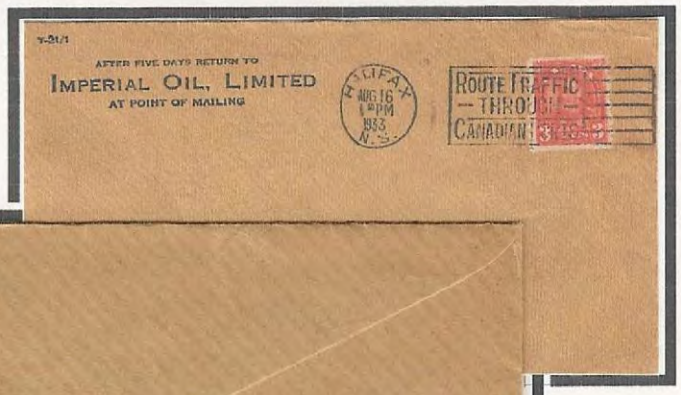
Business Block, Edmunston, N.B.

Another Atlantic three star service station, Edmundston, New Brunswick.

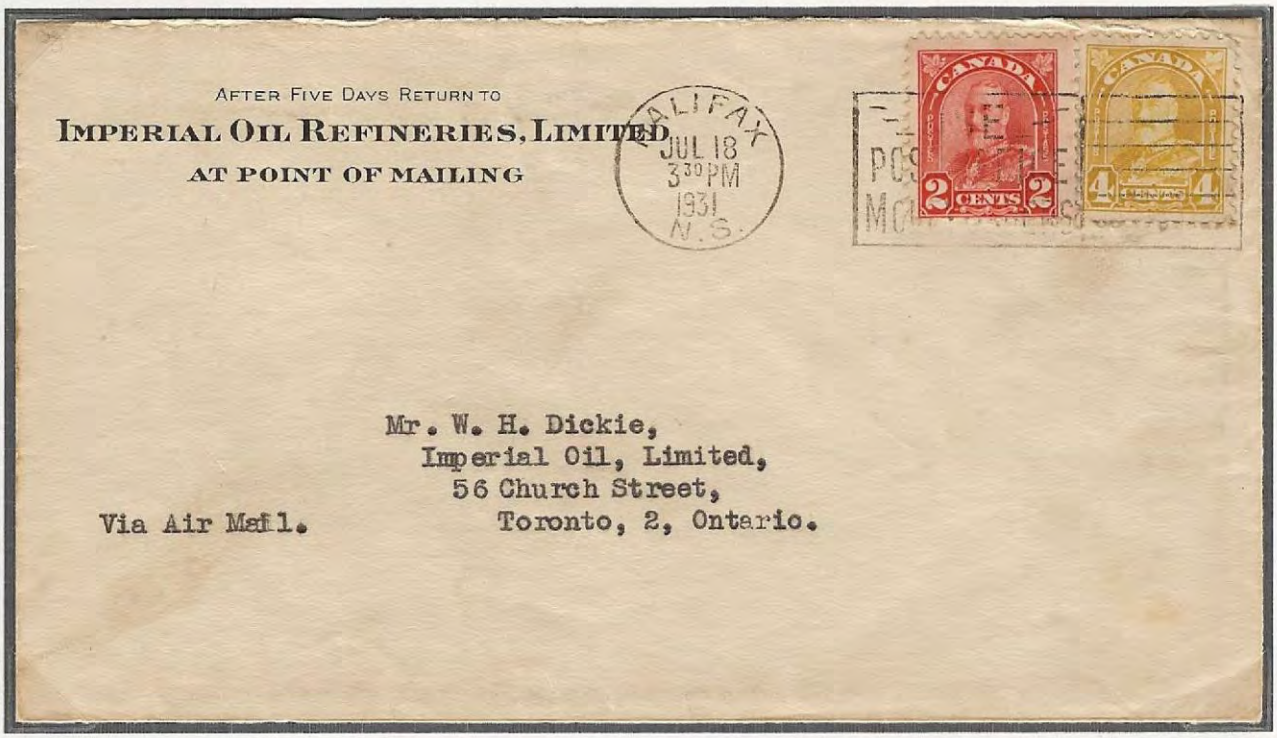
This advertising corner of the Imperial Oil Company was used certainly between 1925 and 1934. These envelopes were mostly used for monthly statements to customers. Almost exclusively coil stamps were used on these covers, although the bottom cover is an Imperial Oil metered mail cover. Also, by now window envelopes were used extensively.

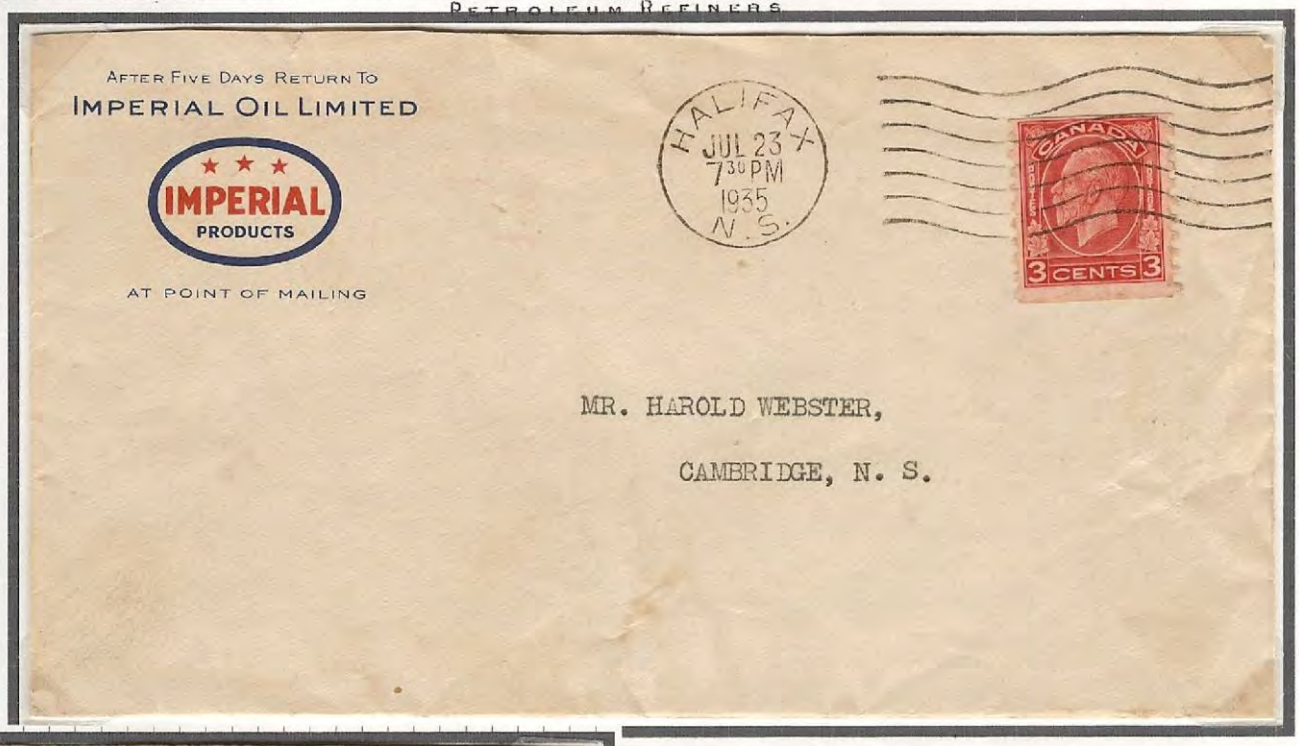
This Imperial Oil cover mailed to the United States carries the correct postage. Air mail rate would increase to eight cents the following year.

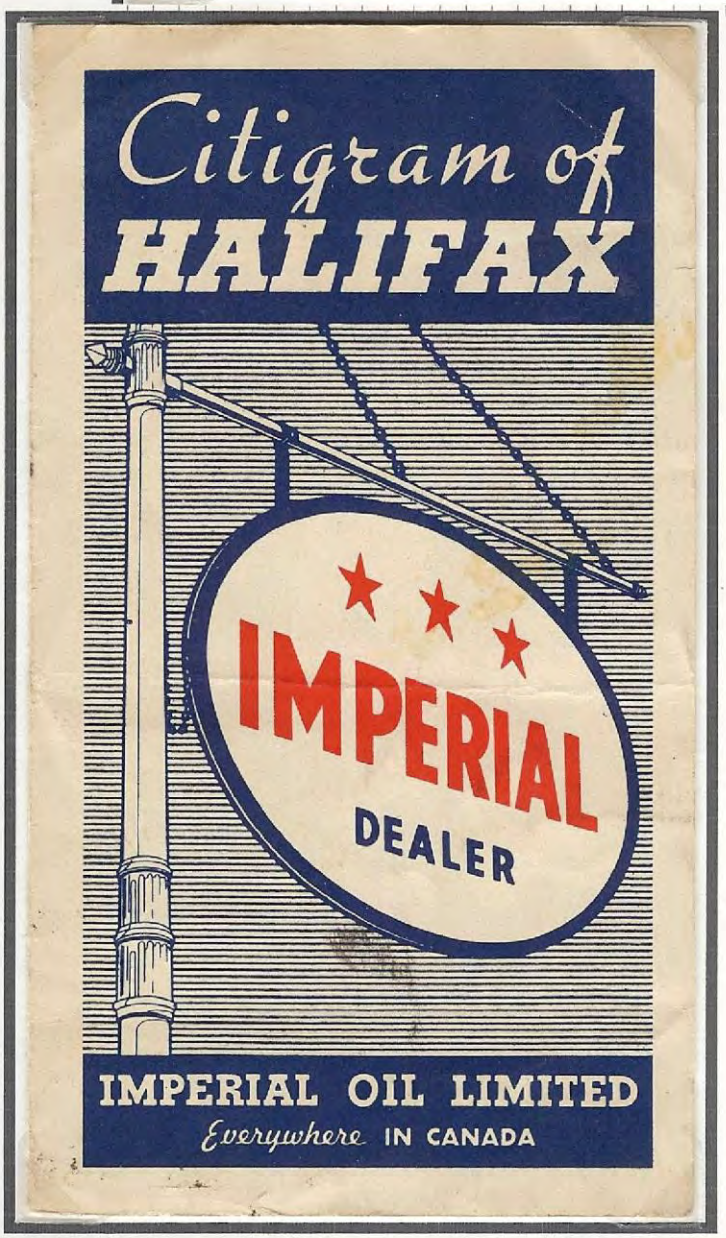
Another product that Imperial Oil promoted was the Atlas Tire as the back of this envelope advertises.



From the early 30's we have three air mail covers. The domestic air mail rate increased from five cents to six cents on July 1st, 1931. These Imperial Oil refinery advertising covers are from three different refineries. Missing is Montreal and Sarnia.







The airmail cover above dated Nov. 6, 1935 is a reminder of year that Imperial Oil began providing Road Maps at their Three Star dealers. The Citigram was part of providing maps not only large areas but cities as well.

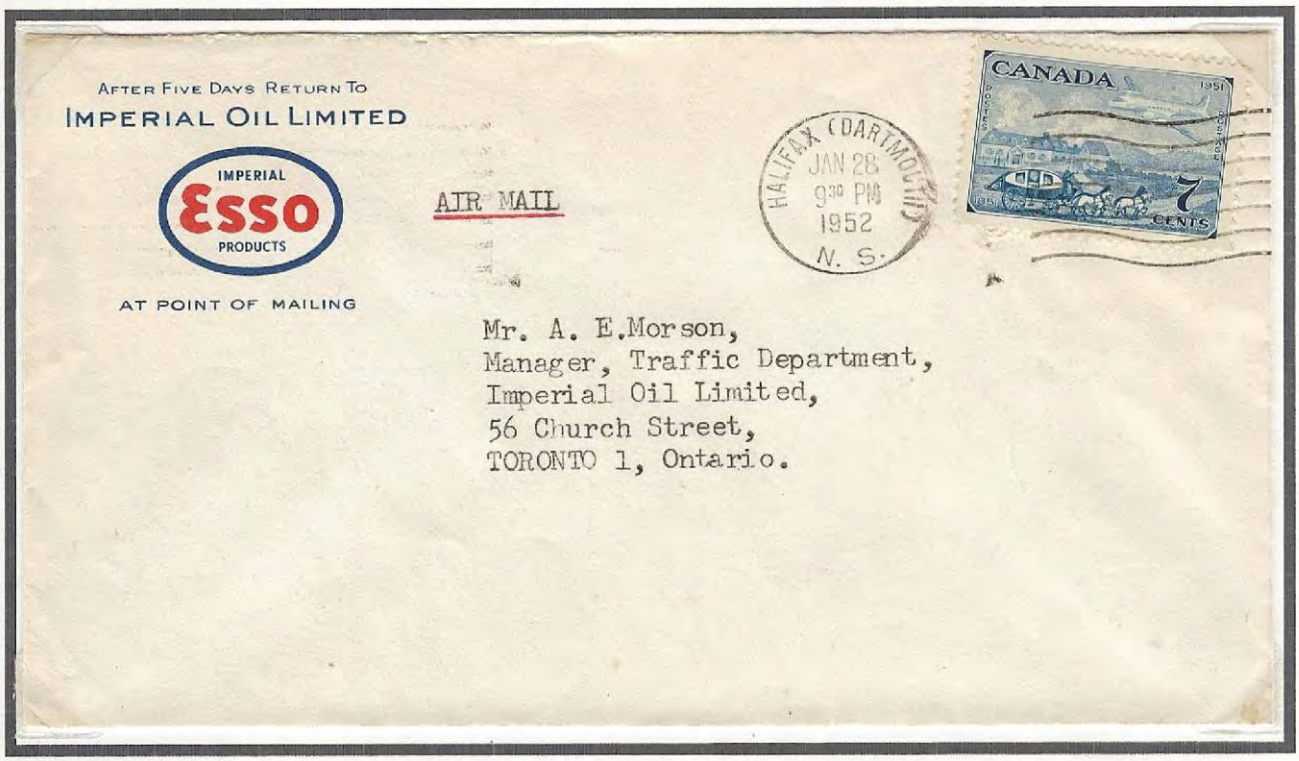
Maps of 1936 showed the location of the home of the Dionne Quintuplets.

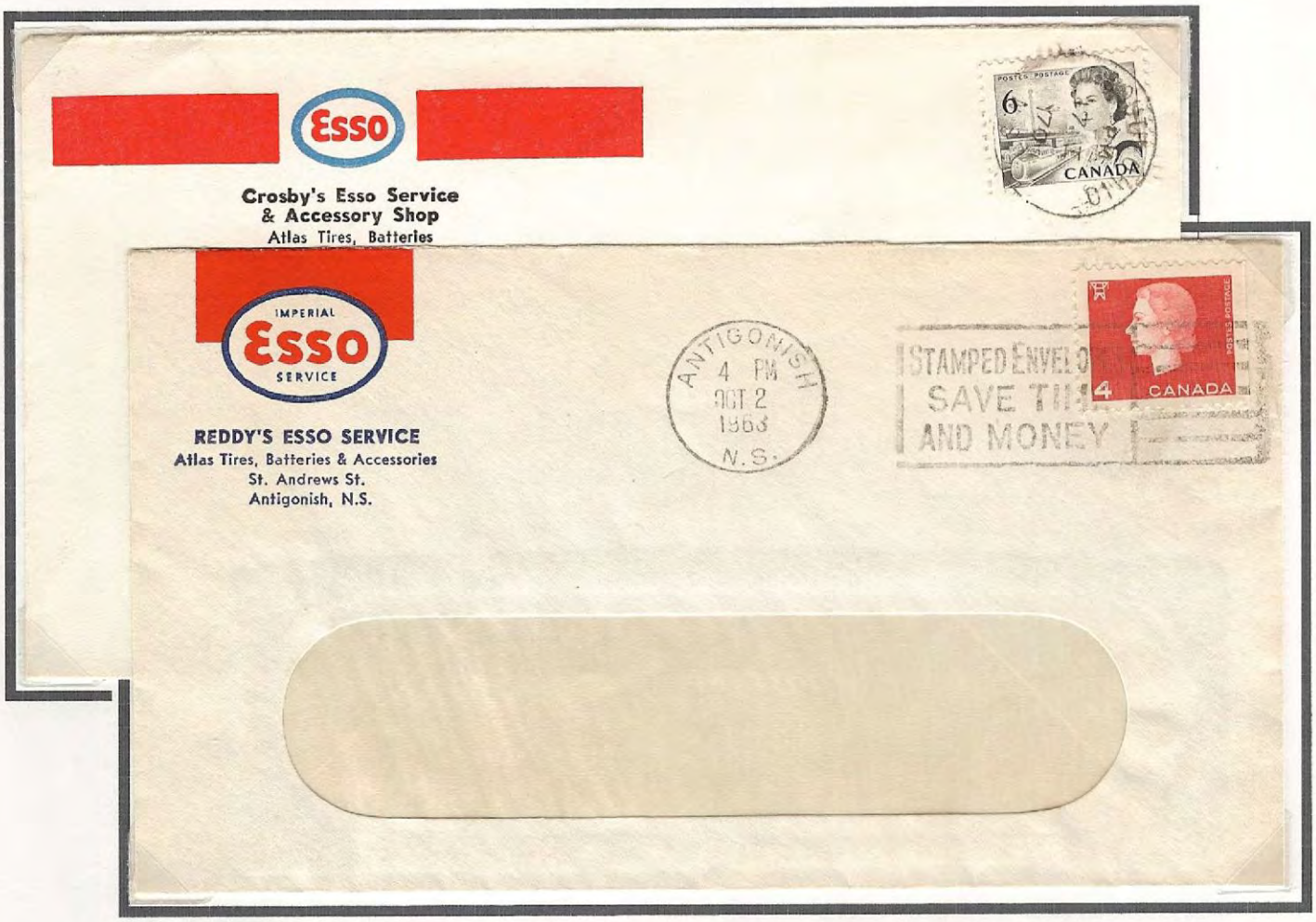
Also in 1936 "Hockey Night in Canada" started its debut on the radio sponsored by Imperial Oil.

Above - the forerunner of the "plastic" (to the left) money --- cardboard.

The ESSO Advertising Cover became widely used in the later part of the 1940's. After the War, Imperial Oil promised its new ESSO gasoline would surpass the prewar quality. With the introduction of ESSO gasoline, the first step in keeping the promise was made.

The cover below, which is dated Jan. 28th, 1952, has been selected because this was the first year for Hockey Night in Canada on television sponsored by ESSO.





ESSO was the international Trade Name for Exxon Mobil and related companies. Pre 1911 'Standard Oil', "SO" as it was known, got expanded to ESSO and product got marketed using the word ESSO.

These two different Advertising Covers of 1980 completes the 100 years of Imperil Oil 1880-1980 - Atlantic perspective.