

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

OTTAWA DEAD LETTER OFFICE HANDSTAMPS 1872 to 1950

Significant items

A large portion of new items of either major DLO significance or philatelic significance have been added or improved in this exhibit, with updated research throughout:

- 1868 Precursor OKC (only known copy) of DLO Return envelopes, pre-handstamp era – Frame 1 Page 1
- Earliest reported Shift marking – Frame 1
- Earliest reported Superintendent's Office Oval handstamp – Frame 2
- Earliest reported & latest reported Chief Superintendent Oval handstamp after decentralization – Frame 2
- OKC Received Double Circle Ottawa handstamp – Frame 2
- Ottawa Double oval OKC on 1920 Admiral cover to Gambia – Frame 2
- First printing of DLO return envelope after decentralization in Ottawa – Frame 5
- Earliest reported DLO Wax Seal used after Decentralization period – Frame 5

This Ottawa Dead Letter Office postal history exhibit takes into consideration my initial BNAPS Study Group Dead Letter Office Newsletter approach to separate the various types (major and sub-types) of Dead Letter Office (DLO) handstamps by size, lettering, characters and dates used.

The period 1872 to 1950 encompasses early Ottawa DLO handstamps on cover to decentralization of the Ottawa Office in 1898 and afterwards until formation of the Undeliverable Mail Office in the early 1950's. **Latest known use for the Ottawa DLO is 1950. Earliest use of UMO cover 1954.**

The words '**Dead Letter Office**' and initials '**D.L.O.**' or '**Bureau des Rebutés**' appear in each handstamp.

Ottawa DLO handstamps shown in this exhibit are on a variety of postal matter both domestic and foreign, printed matter, first class, registered, insufficient postage, unpaid, fraudulently used postage stamps on cover, unclaimed, mail service suspended, unknown and Returned Dead Letter envelopes etc. Each cover tells a lengthy story (5 to 10 handstamps or more) sometimes being held for a period of months or years as per regulations of the Post Office and Dead Letter Office.

Treatment

Each item should bear the reason for non-delivery (Gateway Marking) including a datestamp of the office making the return and be examined upon receipt by the DLO to make sure it has not been held beyond the period specified. Regulations were not followed all the time.

The function of the DLO is to receive these letters (pre 1898: shift marking or date stamp applied; post 1898: receiving handstamp) owing to failure of delivery, for any reason, under regulations that cannot be forwarded to final destination.

Beginning from April each year, items are to be serially numbered (file#). There appears to be no mention of when this procedure started and if it applied to a particular type of postal item or destination of origin.

Items are then examined and opened to try to find the sender's name and address, or to receive and affix proper postage, forward to addressee's proper address and/or return said items in a Returned Dead Letter Envelope, date-stamping each item.

Dead Letter Mail consists mainly of covers with markings of:

- 1: Previously Used Stamps
- 2: Not Called For
- 3: Unknown
- 4: Addressee Deceased
- 5: Addressee Removed (House Torn Down) and other reasons stated
- 6: Unclaimed
- 7: Wholly unpaid or Insufficiently Paid, Forcibly Removed Stamped Matter
- 8: Insufficiently Addressed or failing of delivery items such as Mail Service Suspended
- 9: Returned Dead Letter Envelopes and internal mail

Without the Dead Letter Office, the postal system would slow to a crawl. The postal system is designed to work smoothly. The expertise of the DLO, brought to bear on the small percentage of material that fails delivery, allows the rest of the postal system to function.



Items of special interest are bordered in green.

General DLO Study and Research

- 30+ years of collecting Dead Letter Office handstamps, original research, discovery of new handstamps and detailed examination has un-earthed many new items OKC (only known copy or only known reported copy) Earliest and Latest Reported Dates.
- Recognized authority for adding new finds and critique of the catalogue listings
- Only Known Copies (OKC) are assumed based on reports made, subject to change.
- Characteristics surface from a variety of shapes and sizes of handstamps.
- Many items are poorly handstamped, having been handled many times, or may have been "damaged in the mails". This may also be a result of many handstamps on one item making interpretations difficult. Handstamps were magnified to confirm dimensions many times.
- Dimensions of steel handstamps from 1898 down can be different to due wear and strike. These early hammers were sometimes used over a 20 year period causing wear of minor parts such as an "X" turning into a dot.
- No records exist for all DLO proofs with dates; thus, it is impossible to know which handstamps appeared before others. Only way to compare handstamps is to view similar items together. It is assumed that proofs existed before the use of any hammers.
- Early DLO handstamps will be separated by type, size, lettering with and without dots, size of arcs split and unsplit, etc. Variations may occur with mention of certain handstamps on other pages of covers with multiple handstamps. Later items have more variety in shape, dimensions and lettering. **Not all items are in chronological order as they are organized by type and size as best possible depending upon when the DLO offices opened.**
- Total numbers of all DLO covers from 1898 down are unknown; however, best estimates of 400 to 600 exist with fewer than these numbers in good quality condition as to clarity of strike. This does not include the early DLO Return Envelopes, as they do not normally have DLO handstamps placed on them.

- There are more types and listings of Items from 1898 up due to higher populations resulting in more mail having been produced. A substantial portion of known handstamps is fewer than five known/reported. Many have never been found other than proofs made for the CPO proof books.

Exhibit Plan

See title page.

Previous Awards

BNAPEX 2016 Fredericton, NB – Gold, Ed and Mickey Richardson Award.

ORAPEX 2013, Ottawa, ON – Gold, BNAPS Best Researched BNA Exhibit.

Bibliography

The Dead Letter Office in Canada 1830 – 2002, July 2006 Brian C. Plain

The Dead Letter Office 1874 – 1954, BNAPS exhibit handbook, Gary W. Steele

BNAPS Dead Letter Office Study Group Newsletter - Editor of the newsletter
<http://bnatopics.org/hhlibrary/newsletters/n-dlo.htm>

33 articles continuing series Nova Scotia Post and Mail newsletter, online www.nsstampclub.ca These are also being run in *Maple Leaves*, the journal of the Canadian Philatelic Society of Great Britain.

Proof strikes are from the *Proof Strikes of Canada*, Volume XXIII by Robert A. Lee

P.O. Dead Letter Office Procedure Reports 1933, P.O. Postal Guides 1892, and P.O. Information Manual