

OTTAWA DEAD LETTER OFFICE HANDSTAMPS 1872 to 1898 Decentralization



Plan:

- 1 - Title page
- 2 - Split Circle Handstamp
- 6- Double Split Circle Handstamp
- 7 - Closed Circle Handstamp
- 10 - Closed Circle REC'D
1 to 6 Number Type Handstamp
- 12 - Double Oval Handstamp
- 13 - Superintendent Double Oval Handstamp
- 14 - Circle & Diamond Shift Handstamp
- 16 - Boxed Advice Handstamp

1868 Precursor >>

With Confederation in 1867, a new Post Office Department was created but Dead Letter Office handstamps were not produced until the early 1870's.

At right is an only known 1868 precursor of later printed Dead Letter Return envelopes with manuscript instructions for un-paid letters.

April 29, 1868, un-paid letter
RETURNED-FOR / POSTAGE
examined for name and address to return to sender.

Purpose:

The exhibit shows the evolution of **Ottawa Dead Letter Office (DLO) handstamps** from 1872 up to the 1st July 1898, Decentralization into additional branches thru Canada.

Treatment & Structure

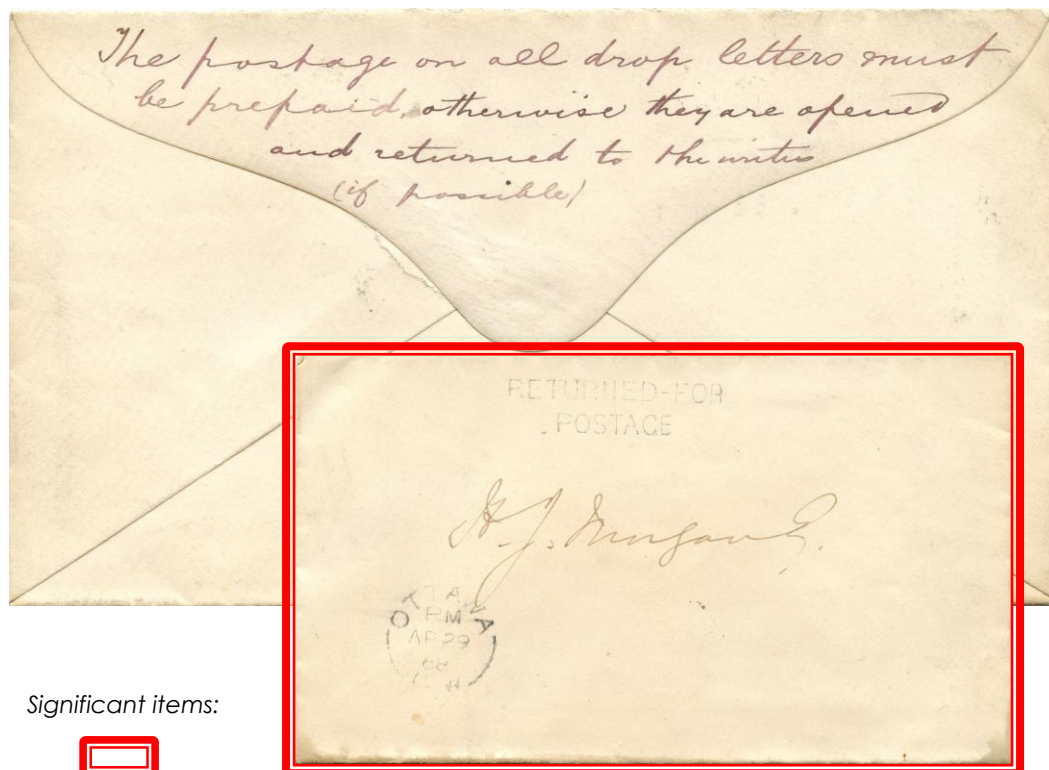
The use of Dead Letter Office handstamps was only by the Ottawa Office / Branch prior to decentralization in 1898.

Items are usually listed by type per catalogue order of listings, dimensions, lettering including periods, commas, and dashes. This will result in a general chronological order, but not for every item as the ranges overlap. The listing for each item includes the lettering of the handstamp and indicia, major and subtype of handstamp, dimensions, important variations as compared to similar handstamps, if a proof strike was taken and importance such as Previously Unknown, Only Reported Copy (**ORC**) or Earliest (**ERD**) and Latest (**LRD**) reported dates of use. Throughout the exhibit are numerous previously unknown, unreported, earliest, and latest reported dates discovered by the exhibitor.

Background:

The Dead Letter Office received and treated mail matter that could not be forwarded to its destination. This included mail addressed for delivery in Canada, mail posted outside of Canada and addressed for delivery in Canada, and Canadian mail originally addressed to foreign countries then returned because it bore insufficient forwarding information.

Without the Dead Letter Office, the postal system would slow to a crawl. The Ottawa office was the beginning till decentralization, and the division is still in operation today as the UMO in Scarborough, Ont.



Significant items:



Split Circle Handstamp

Split Circle handstamps are the earliest Dead Letter Office handstamps produced in the early 1870's up to decentralization of the DLO in 1898. They range in size from 21mm to 26mm, with single line, dashed and dotted side arcs in varying dimensions. Seven proofs are known with many no proof known.

Note one Double Split Circle handstamp exists, a recent new find p.7.



DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE

JA 15

1872

– CANADA –

25mm diameter

Arcs 5mm wide

Split Circle Handstamp



No proof known

Indianapolis, Ind. to Woodstock, Ontario, RETURNED FOR / BETTER DIRECTION via Hamilton to Dead Letter Office in Ottawa JA 15 1872

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE

AP 27

1874

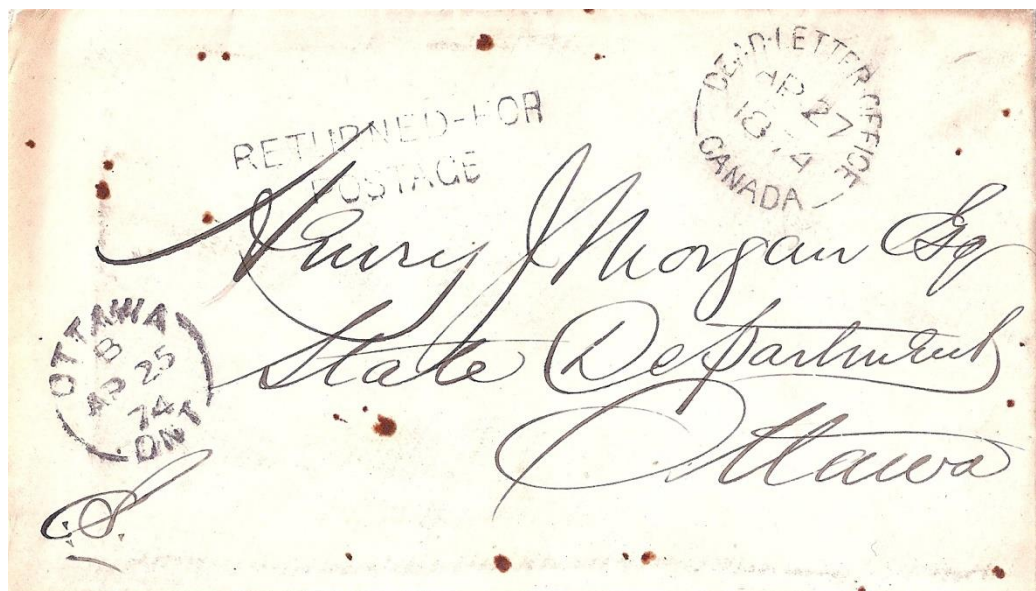
-- CANADA --

25mm diameter

Split arcs on
left 6mm wide
right 4mm wide

Most arcs are split to
some degree even
with proofs from
wear

ONLY REPORTED COPY



No proof known

Gateway marking:
**RETURNED-FOR
POSTAGE**

April 25, 74 letter sent to the State Department, Ottawa; unpaid thus sent to DLO AP 27/1874; cleared as Free Franking (Government Dep't)

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE

JA 18

1873

- CANADA -

25.5mm with 4mm arcs

Split Circle Handstamp

Signed Gilbert Griffin, P.O. Inspector
(future Deputy Postmaster General)



London. Aut
16th Jan 1873



Dear Sir. T. H. Wright Esq

Treas. Sandwich - makes

enq. for Little deed returning

Obverse 50%:

to Lot 18. 13th

which he intended to send this office to date.

to a drop of

but which was

therefore misaddressed - and as

the packet or letter would have

had nothing but the bare papers -

or deeds - they may not - uniting

enquiry - if rec? at D.L.O. have

been dealt with in any way.

Would you oblige by ascertaining if

there are such Papers or not?

Wm. White Esq.

Setty Road

Mem:
No such Packet has
been sent to this office to date.
Dear Mr Wright P.M.
Please send
them up -
Yr. Servant
Gilbert Griffin

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE
MY 5
1876
– CANADA –

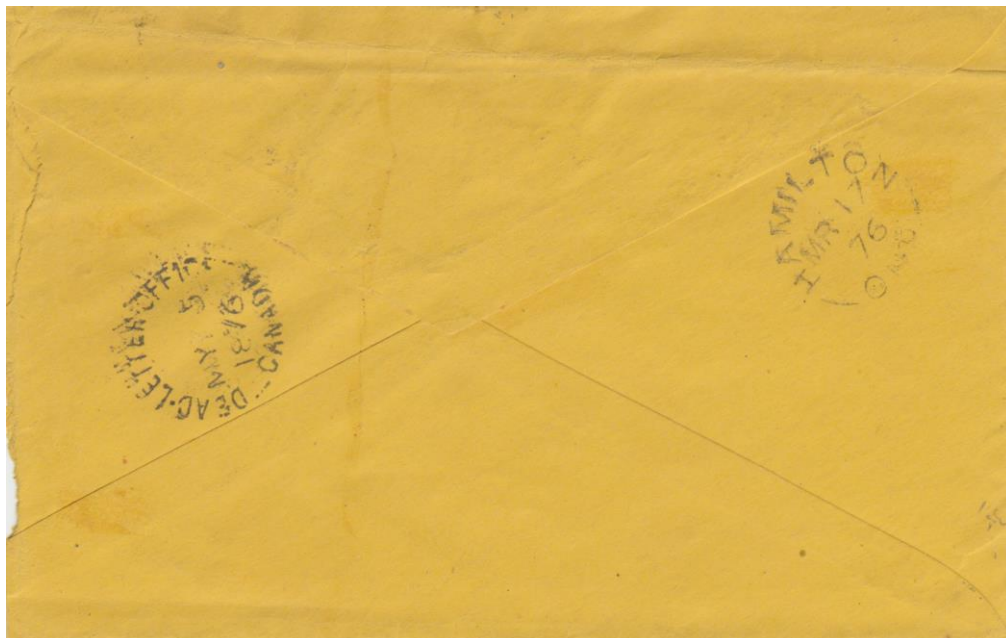
21mm diameter

Arcs 2.5mm wide
with dots
separating
upper wording



Proof Strike

Cornwall, Ont. MR 15 1876
to Hamilton, **UNCLAIMED**
sent to Ottawa
DLO MY 5 1876



Split Circle Handstamp

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE
JU 5
1888
..... CANADA.....

23mm diameter

5 dotted arc
4mm wide
with dots separating
upper wording



Proof strike

Note circular Shift
marking 20mm:
DLO 2

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE

Scan 60%



UNCLAIMED and **Advertised** in the U.S. charged 1 cent postage due, not collected

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE

SP 1

W76

— CANADA —

23mm diameter

Arcs 4mm wide

Right arc split,
with dots
separating
upper wording

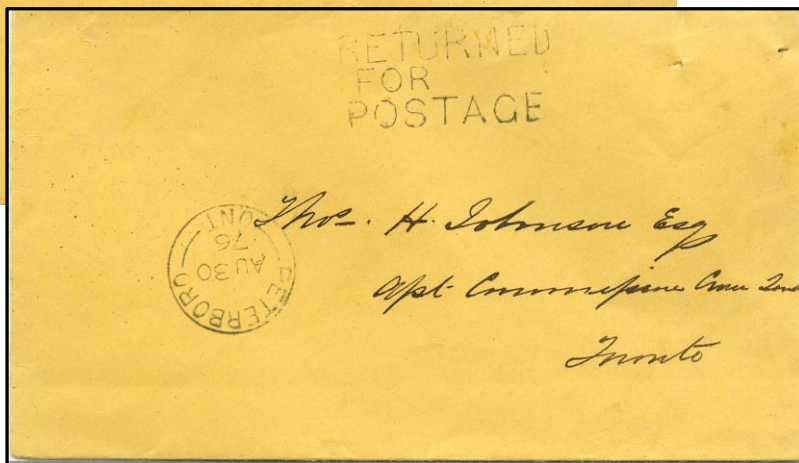
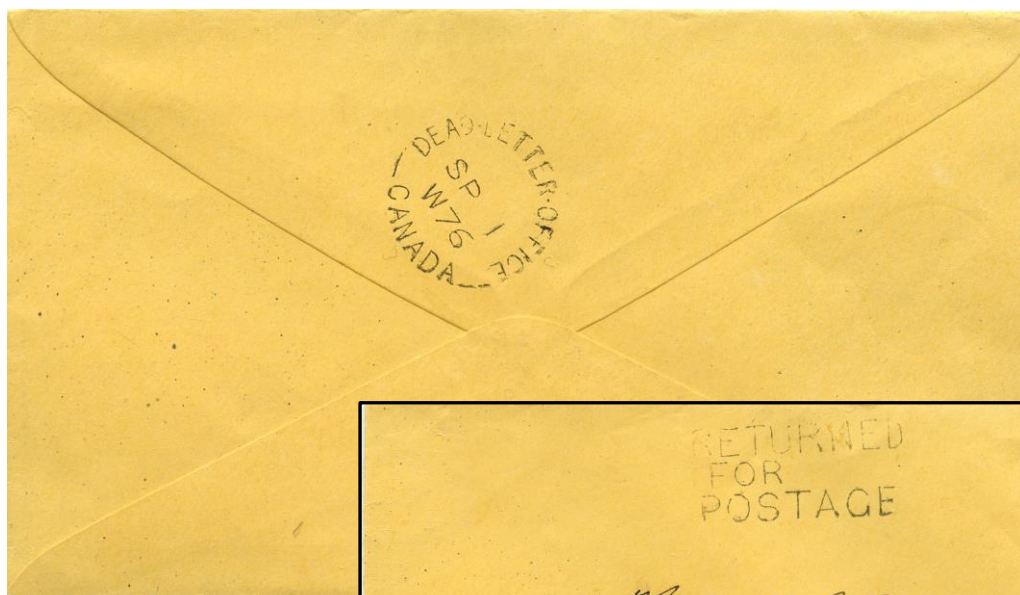
No proof known

Scan 75%

'**W**' as spacer for century date
assumed may be for weekend use,
however, SP 1 1876 is a Friday.

Split Circle Handstamp

W in Year



DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE

OC 25

1881

— CANADA —

25mm diameter

Arcs 4mm wide



Proof Strike

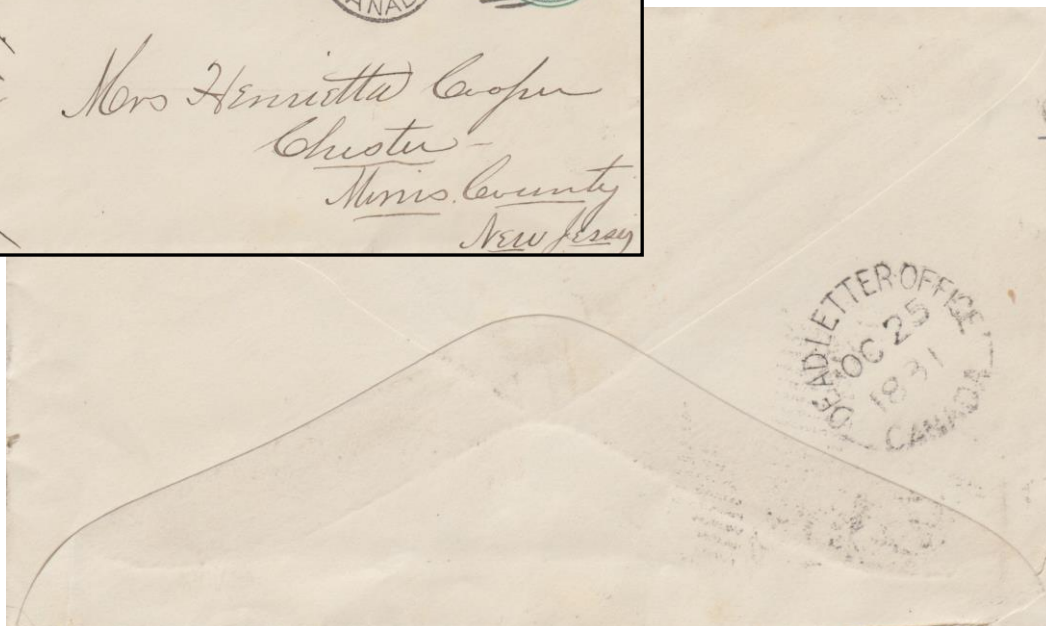
Scan 60%

**RETURNED
FOR
POSTAGE**

Gateway marking

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE

22 days after Proof Strike



Quebec, Canada Oct,81 three cent US stationery envelope to New Jersey.
RETURNED FOR POSTAGE; to DLO (file #397) OC 25 1881 paid NO 2,81 by 3¢ Small Queen.

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE

JA 27

1882

- CANADA -

26mm diameter

Arcs 3mm wide

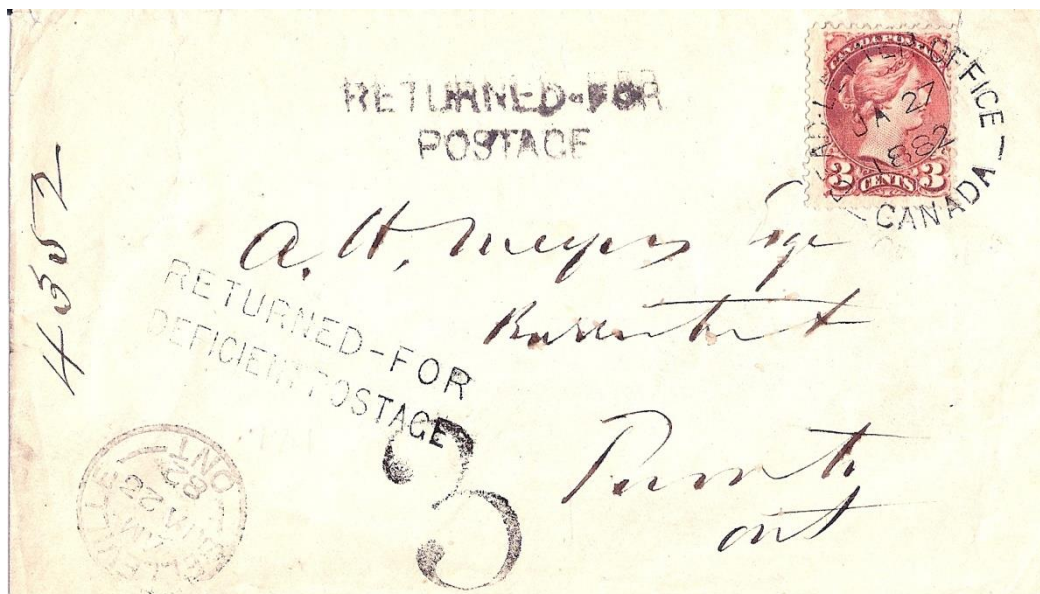
Most DLO handstamps are on backside



Proof Strike

Note DLO file #4352 on left

Split Circle Handstamp



Belleville, Ont. JA 23, 1882 letter **RETURNED - FOR/POSTAGE**
+ "3" (cents); sent to DLO, paid JA 27, 1882.

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE

JA 12

1889

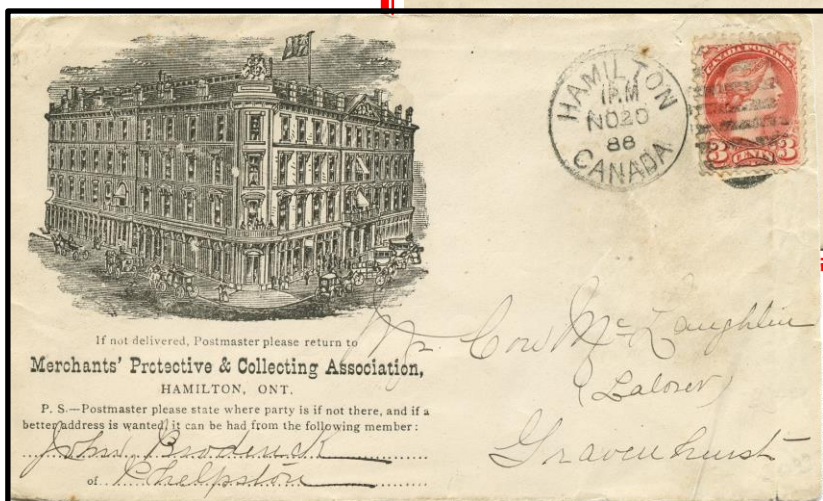
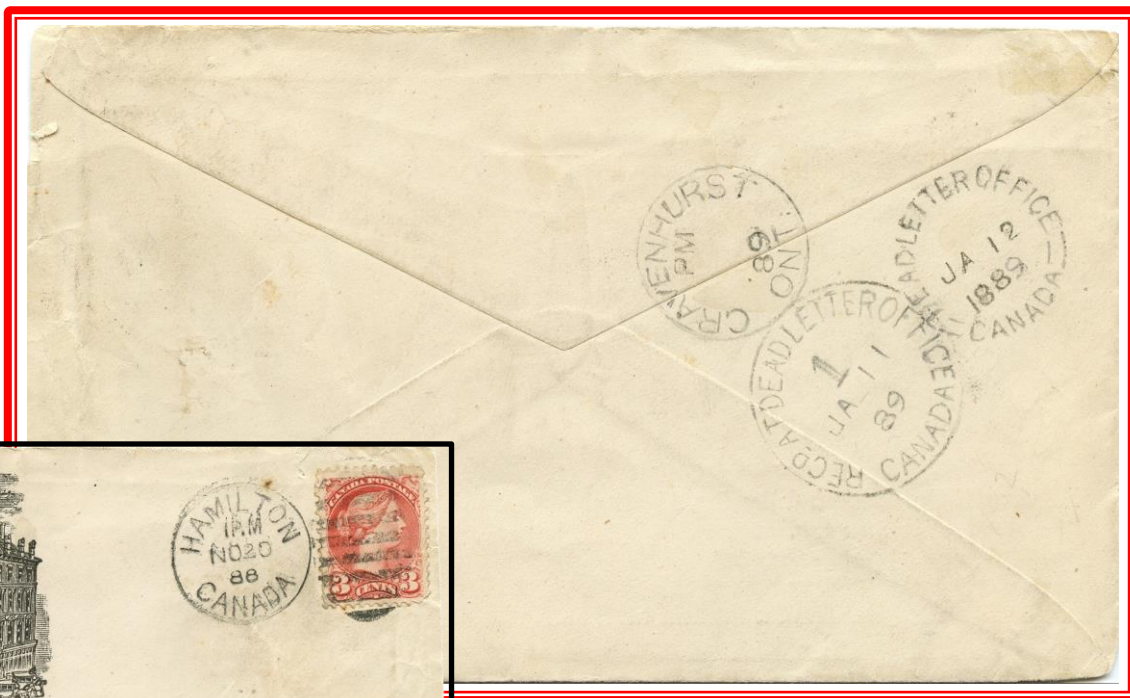
= CANADA =

23mm diameter

Arcs 4.7 & 3mm wide

No proof strike known

Double Split Circle Handstamp



NEW Handstamp type, ONLY REPORTED COPY

Scan 75%

Closed Circle Handstamp

Closed Circle handstamps were not produced till 1880, as per earliest known report on the next page. they continued in use up to decentralization of the DLO in 1898. They range in size from 24mm to 30mm.

A distinct difference, the words **OFFICE** & **BRANCH** were used interchangeably between handstamps. Other features such as dots, hyphens '-' & '+' are between words. Nine proofs are recorded, although several reports are with no proof strike known.



DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE
MR 30
1885
CANADA

25mm diameter

No dots or hyphens

DLO handstamps on cover fronts are uncommon, usually to cancel stamps

Closed Circle Office Handstamp

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE

Very rare
dual
franking
registration
stamps
2¢ & 5¢,
1 of 2 reported



Proof Strike



Registered letter Tioga, Ont. MR 9 85 to Broome Co. N.Y.,

RETURNED FOR / DEFICIENT POSTAGE sent to the Ottawa DLO on MR 23 85 Postage/funds received and **franked with 5 cent registration stamp MR 30 85 to comply with regulations requiring registration fees to be paid with registration stamps** and a 1 cent Small Queen to make up 6 cents payment for a double weight letter 3 cents 1st ounce and 3 cents 2nd ounce.

DEAD • LETTER • OFFICE
MR 17
1880
CANADA

Closed Circle Office Handstamp

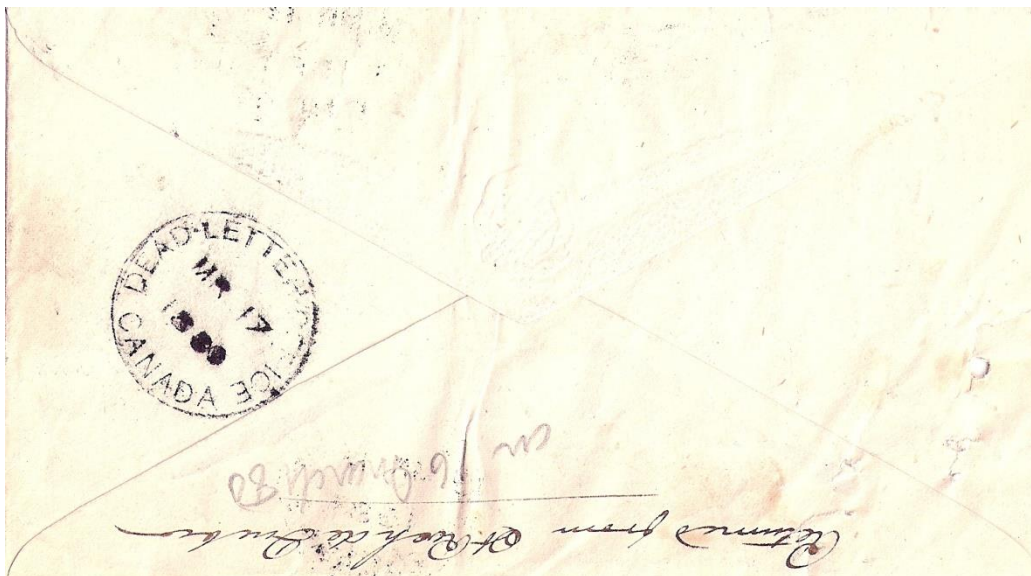
EARLIEST REPORTED CLOSED CIRCLE DLO

27.25mm diameter

No dots after **OFFICE**
or **CANADA**

Manuscript on back:
Returned from St. Roch...
on 16 March 80

No proof known



Quebec, Que. JA 6 80 short-paid letter **RETURNED FOR POSTAGE**
but not paid; apparently returned by DLO to sender in Return Envelope

DEAD LETTER OFFICE
14 JY
1891
• CANADA •

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE

28mm diameter

Dots on each side:

• CANADA •



Proof Strike

Scan 75%

Brantford, Ontario JY22 1891 to Bakewell, England Aug 10 91, registered with 5 cents for up ½ ounce UPU rate and **RETURNED FOR/5¢ POSTAGE** via Hamilton to Ottawa JY 20 1891 then Ottawa DLO on JY 24 1891. Opened and examined for senders address to receive 5 cents in postage. 5 cents received and paid / cancelled at Ottawa DLO JY 28 1891 forwarded to addressee. Transiting via Manchester and arriving at Bakewell 10 AU 91.

• CANADA. •

Large dots on each side of • **CANADA.** • and period after **CANADA.**

This is the **smallest**
of the Closed circle
DLO Office and
Branch handstamps.



Proof Strike

Closed Circle Branch Handstamp



“BRANCH” handstamps started showing in proofs in 1892

CANADA.

Dots between
upper words
and
period after
CANADA.

Largest of
Closed Circle
DLO
handstamps



Scan 75%

>>

Proofed
DE 16 1893

Mailed Halifax, N.S. NO 13 97 to Glasgow Scotland marked **INSUFFICIENT ADDRESS**, sent to **Return Letter Office Glasgow**, opened and officially sealed in Glasgow, Post Office. Returned to Canada Ottawa Dead Letter Office DE 27 97, examined, and returned to sender in DLO Return envelope DE 30.

RECD AT DEAD LETTER OFFICE 1 through 3
RECD AT DEAD LETTER BRANCH 4 through 6

Closed Circle Handstamp

RECD AT DEAD LETTER OFFICE handstamps used numbers '1' through '3', with three proofs of the '1' handstamp recorded, the earliest dated JY 16 / 81. **RECD** is recognized as **RECEIVED** as the word **RECEIVED** appears in a proof.



RECD AT DEAD LETTER BRANCH handstamps used numbers '4' through '6', proofed in 1892 & 1893.

RECD AT DEAD LETTER OFFICE

1
MY 21
1883
CANADA.

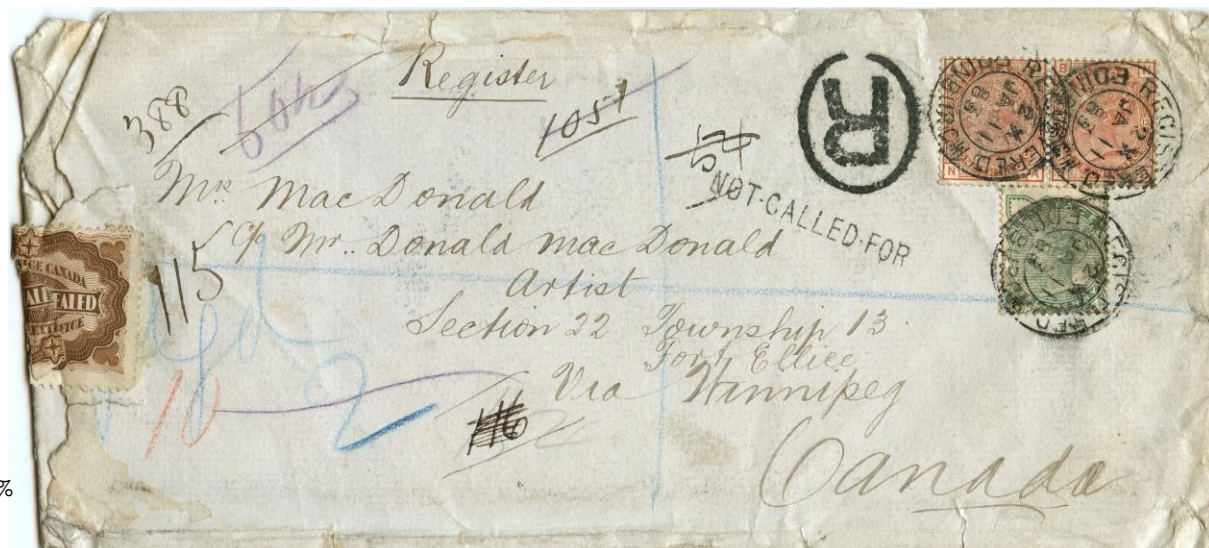
28mm diameter

"1" is 1.5mm wide

Period after **CANADA.**

Note **OX1** sealing
damaged
envelope

Scan 70%



REC'D AT DEAD LETTER OFFICE

1

SP 4

97

CANADA.

29mm diameter

Period after **CANADA.**

Halifax, N.S. to USA,
Marked **removed** &
ADVERTISED sent to DLO
in the U.S. forwarded to
The Ottawa DLO.



3rd Proof strike

Closed Circle Office Handstamp

Used with new handstamp, 3rd proof 1893.



Five different Ottawa DLO handstamps, with a U.S. Triangle DLO

REC'D AT DEAD LETTER BRANCH

6

MY 31

97

CANADA.

29mm diameter

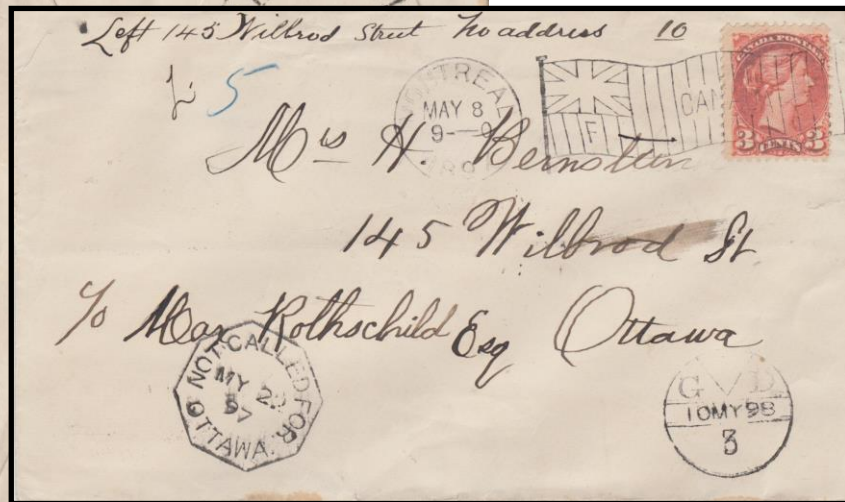
Period after
CANADA.

No dots between
upper words
Note Closed Circle
handstamp shows
'OFFICE' while the
REC'D 6 Closed Circle
indicates 'BRANCH'



Proof strike

Closed Circle Branch Handstamp



Front scan 75%

Montreal May 8 1897 to Ottawa sent to General Delivery (GD h/s rare) 10 MY 98
(should have been 97), **NOT CALLED FOR** octagonal h/s MY 22 97, sent to Ottawa DLO MY 31

Double Oval Handstamp

Only three Double Oval **Dead Letter Office** or **Branch / Canada** proofs are known prior to July 1, 1898. Less than a handful are reported of known handstamp types. They were mainly used by inspectors to seal envelopes with official seals or for parcels that found their way to the DLO.

DEAD LETTER OFFICE

APR
21
1888
+ CANADA +

37mm x 28mm

Double oval
Sans-serif, all caps



Proof strike.

Only known on three examples
of the 1879 Official Seal stamps

DEAD LETTER BRANCH

13 6
CANADA.

41 x 27mm

Double oval, day /month
Sans-serif, all caps



Proof strike

The year date is not shown on this handstamp type, however, from a similar but different proof strike ⁽¹⁾ 1894 is an approximate time period.

This type is similar to parcel handstamps used in several larger cities during the Small Queen period. Although wear appears to show in the ovals, the proof strike is very similar with a thin border imprint.

Double Oval Parcel Handstamp



Superintendent Double Oval Handstamp

The **Superintendent Double Oval** is a unique style type for this period. There are no proofs known of any Superintendent DLO handstamps prior to 1900. They were used by the Superintendent for only items of importance, complex difficult to handle items, and or fraudulent items such as franking's with used stamps. Period of use 1892 to June 30, 1898.

DEAD + LETTER + BRANCH

• P.O. DEPT. CANADA. •

SUPERINTENDENT

JAN

19

1892

37mm x 27mm

Note: +s between
the words:

DEAD + LETTER + BRANCH



In early hammers these
gradually wore down
over time to dots

No proof known

EARLIEST REPORTED COPY



Swedish post card Tidakoln Dec 14 1891 incorrectly addressed, misdirected to the United States, sent by U.S. DLO/Inspection Division January 5, 1892 (on reverse) to the Ottawa DLO.

DEAD + LETTER + BRANCH

• P.O. DEPT. • CANADA . •

SUPERINTENDENT

FEB

8

1898

"Stamp previously used" sent to Superintendent's office "⊗" zero marked

The Superintendent
handstamp continued
only till decentralization.

A similar handstamp
with the words
'CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT'
replaced this
handstamp after
June 30th 1898.



D • L • O ✕ 1, 2, & 3

Circle and Diamond Shift Handstamp

The **Circle** and **Diamond** Shift Marking handstamps used numbers **1, 2** and **3** to designate the 8-hour work shift that processed an item. No proof dates are available, as the handstamps did not have an enclosed date. The **Circle Shift** markings were used during the middle 1870's of the Ottawa DLO into the 1880's, with a 2nd version (**no dots & D pointing right**) used in 1888. The **Diamond Shift** markings appeared later in the late 1880's until decentralization of the DLO.

D • L • O

1

✕

'D' pointing up
with dots
1876

D • L • O

2

✕

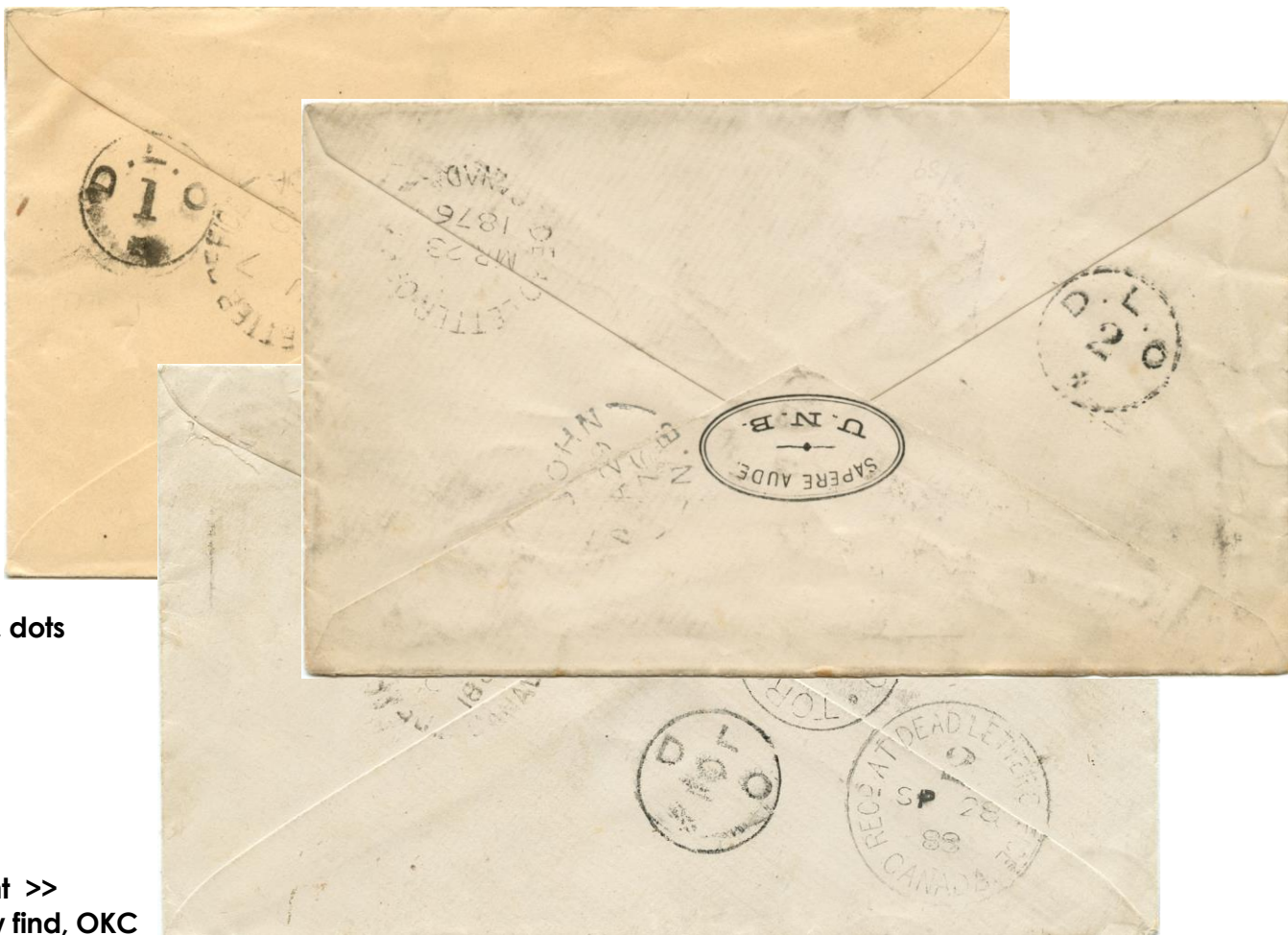


D pointing up, dots



D pointing right >>
& no dots, new find, OKC

Circle Shift Handstamp



ONLY REPORTED COPY #3 CIRCLE SHIFT HANDSTAMP

D L O

3

✕

Processed by
a clerk during
the 3rd shift, rare
on the front cover.

OVER 1/2 OZ.

Extra 3 cents
required, received
and applied .



D L O 1 ✖

Diamond Shift Handstamp

15mm x 15mm

Used JU 23 1898

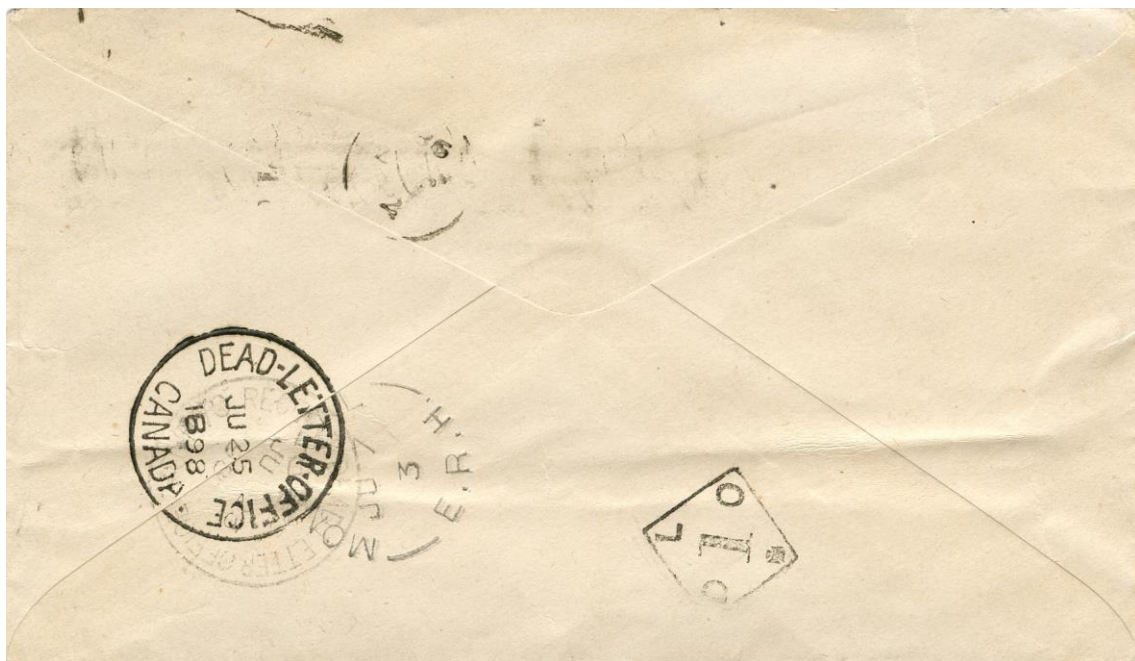
as per faint

RECD DLO

Closed Circle

Also note LRD of
closed circle DLO
JU 25 1898

19mm diameter



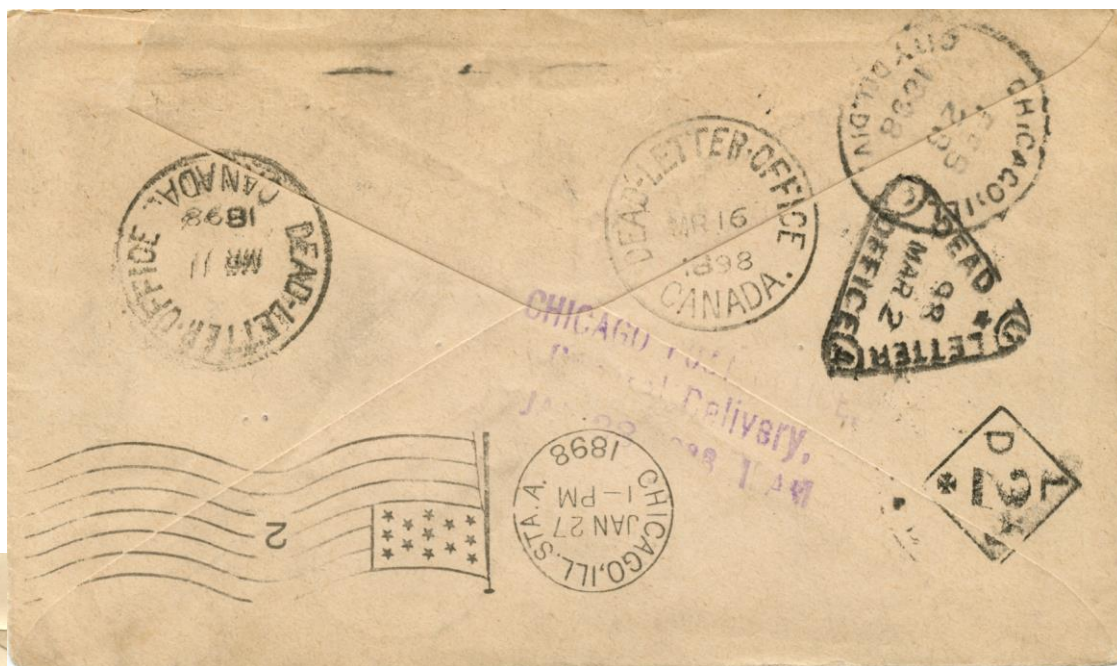
**LATEST
REPORTED
DATE of
any shift
handstamp.**

<<

D L O 2 ✖

15mm x 15mm

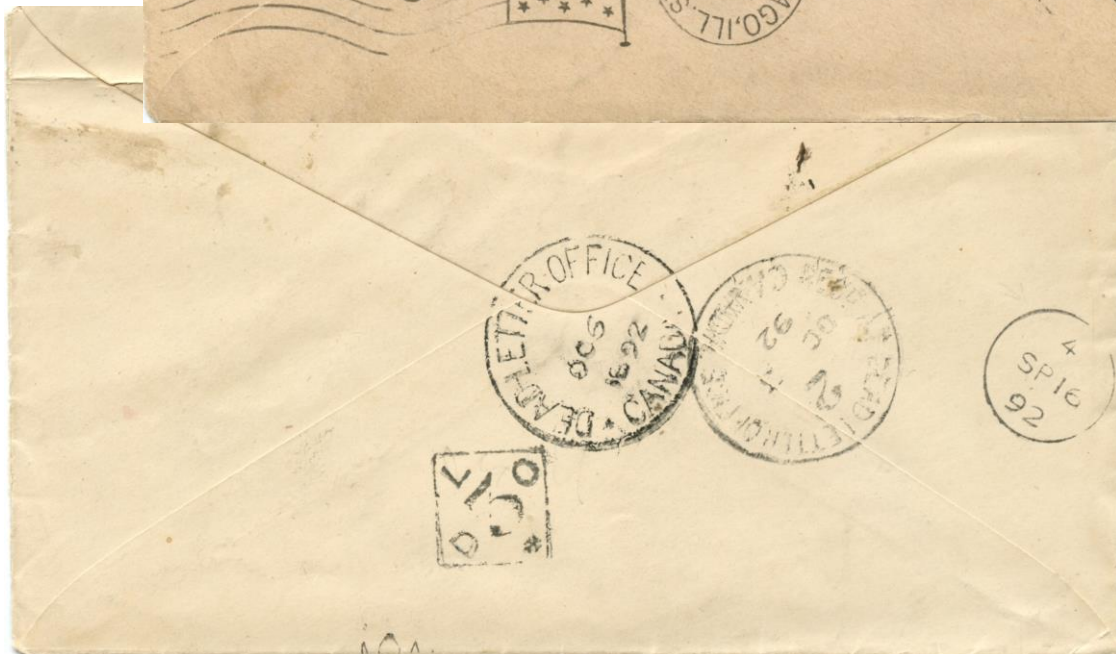
Proofed, however
there is no date
for any Diamond
Shift handstamps.



D L O 3 ✖

15mm x 15mm

Dark clear strikes
of the shift markings
are not easy to find,
many being under
other handstamps.



**No postal communication
with this destination at
present.**

D. L. BRANCH, CANADA.

Boxed Advice Handstamp

NEW FIND, ONLY REPORTED COPY

70mm x 26mm, double box handstamp
Sans-serif, first three lines mixed,
4th line caps, all lettering in italics

Mailed during the time of the **Cuban War of Independence**, possibly could not be delivered due to Cuban mail restrictions, resulting in the special double boxed handstamp '**No postal communication...**' being produced.



The use of this handstamp and most others ceased just two days later when the Dead Letter Office in Ottawa was decentralized into various DLO branches across Canada.