



# THE CANADIAN DEAD LETTER OFFICE

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

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Issue 11

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## The Victoria Post Office Part 2



Article by  
Brian Plain

## Today in Dead Letter Office Postal History

Everything changes.

Last year the North Sydney Nova Scotia Undeliverable Mail Office was shut down, although most people may not have even realized there was a UMO in that city.

This year Canada Post spent hundreds of millions of dollars on new systems and machinery that is changing the way our inside and outside postal staff operate.

I have had six or seven different mail delivery persons over the last month. My regular delivery person suffered an injury and may never get back to work.

The mail delivery person no longer spends 3 hours a day sorting mail, but sits around for hours waiting to pick mail up at a large red box after 5:00 should they finish their deliveries early.

My mail is no longer delivered between 11:00 and 1:00; it is now delivered around 4:00.

I no longer have any faith in trusting my mail to the mail delivery person when bad weather arises. The new bags they use are useless and do not protect material from the elements. Also, they are quite open, placing their contents at risk of loss as evidenced by a neighbour having found some of my mail on the sidewalk. Luckily it was not an expensive cover.

New systems, new staff and new regulations do not necessarily translate into a safer and more efficient postal service.

## Editor's Comments

BNAPEX 2013 just concluded with most participants enjoying themselves of the weather and food PEI (Prince Edward Island) could provide. Dead Letter Office material was scarce at the show although a couple of nice items surfaced.

Approximately 8 BNAPSers attended the studygroup meeting. A review of the newsletters and online postings was done. Earle Covert gave an interesting insight into the new Canada Post operations of bins and labels used, included were UNDELIVERABLE MAIL or UNDELIVERABLE PUBLISHED MAIL bins. We may have some scans in this issue.

For Issue #11 we start with Part 2 on Brian Plain's Victoria Dead Letter Office exhibit.

***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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It is fall again and another busy few months has passed by far too quickly. BNAPS is over and a big vote of thanks is due to Editor Gary and all the other committee members for a great show in Charlottetown. Sadly, I was not able to attend.

The Dead Letter Office continues to be a fascinating topic of study with new material surfacing, new early and late dates being found, updating of the databases continuing and additions and updates to the DLO book being prepared. In addition to the updates, a couple of new sections will be included: Ron Maguire's chapter on the Officially Sealed labels and a new database dealing with the stationery of the Dead Letter Office up to the introduction of generic Canada Post stationery. These are daunting subjects and help from the members is requested. Ron requires scans of any covers utilizing the Officially Sealed labels, and I need a list of any stationery you may have that bears D. or D.L as part of the printing code. This information should include: the presence of the place of use and whether it is hand stamped or printed on the cover, the full code, the date and place of usage, and the appearance and rate of the due marking (i.e. 3 in oval). If a wax seal is on the cover that too is important information.

I again urge all members to review their holdings and report new dates or items to either Gary or me. If you have something of interest, feel free to write an article for inclusion in a future newsletter. More items and varying writers will certainly increase the value of our newsletter.

**Recent Auction & Sale Listings**

Eastern Auctions Ltd. just had their huge three day auction last weekend, of note was a bi-sected five cent Jubilee cover charged postage due and sent to the Dead Letter Office and franked with a 3c Jubilee stamp with a DLO split ring applied. Price including premiums and tax was in excess of \$500.

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

**Brian C. Plain**

**The Expansion Period - July 1, 1898 to 1913**

On June 1, 1898, the POD announced the decentralization of dead letter services, and informed postmasters that as of July 1, (1898) offices would be opened in several Canadian cities. The establishment of a Branch Dead Letter Office\* in Victoria was heralded as a coup for British Columbia and brought with it the promise of enhanced service and further reduction in the delay of return of undelivered mail.

\*Branch Dead Letter Offices were authorized to process letters and all other classes of dead or undeliverable mail matter.

This cover is an early example of processing of a dead letter by the Victoria Branch DLO.



DEAD LETTER BRANCH /  
CANADA  
W/ JY 3 / 00

D.L.O. CANADA / VICTORIA  
BRANCH

Cover front shown at 75% of original size

*Mailed at Bristol England on March 6, 1900 this cover arrived in Winnipeg on March 17. Forwarded to Cranbrook, it arrived on March 29 where it remained unclaimed and was held for three months before being marked NOT CALLED FOR. The cover was then sent to the Pacific regional Dead Letter Office in Victoria for return to sender. Victoria applied its circular Branch DLO date stamp, and on June 22 forwarded the cover to the Dead Letter Office in Ottawa. It was date-stamped there on July 3, 1900 before being returned to England.*

**THE CANADIAN DEAD LETTER OFFICE**

**The Expansion Period**

**July 1, 1898 to 1913**

The previously outlined regulations were modified slightly and continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with an addition indicating that the reason for non-delivery must be (clearly) stamped or written on the address side of the undeliverable item before it was sent to the Dead Letter Office. A date stamp of the Dead Letter Office was also to be applied to signify completion of that office's activity. In the fall of 1905, Victoria seldom complied with these regulations.

The items shown below illustrate partial non-compliance with these regulations. What is notable is the absence of a Dead Letter Office date stamp although both items would have been processed there.

From: Victoria 22/SP 13/05

To: Alameda, California

UNPAID



From: Victoria 18/SP 26/05

To: Portland, Oregon

UNPAID

The UNPAID hand stamp was a colonial postmark used on unpaid mail. On October 1, 1875, prepayment of postage by stamps became mandatory in Canada. This UNPAID mark was used in the mid 1860s and in 1875. It probably was resurrected (as seen here) to meet the postal requirement that mail sent to the Dead Letter Office have the reason clearly marked on the address side.

# THE CANADIAN DEAD LETTER OFFICE

## The Expansion Period

July 1, 1898 to 1913

By 1906, mail processed by the Branch Dead Letter Office in Victoria used specific handstamps. The previously used circular date stamp (sometimes seen in conjunction with a flattened, double-ring oval dater) disappears, only to re-appear briefly in 1913. The most common marking seen in 1906 and 1907 is the heavily worn double oval, which by this time appears as a 'fat' single ring.

The first item shown below illustrates partial compliance with regulations by the presence of a Dead Letter Office date stamp but an absence of a reason for its being sent there. The second item shows full compliance with the DLO oval plus a weakly struck UNPAID marking.



From: Victoria 11/SP 7/07

To: Walpole, Massachusetts

UNPAID (faint)

**The Expansion Period**

**July 1, 1898 to 1913**

In 1902, the Post Office Department opened a Branch Dead Letter Office in Vancouver. This office assumed responsibility for undeliverable mail in British Columbia with the exception of such mail originating or failing of delivery on Vancouver Island. By 1908, fully 90 percent of undeliverable mail was being processed at the new office.

The old, worn-out flattened oval marking used at Victoria was replaced in 1908 with a new double-oval handstamp showing small sans-serif lettering over a large, seriffed VICTORIA B.C. An example of this marking is shown below.

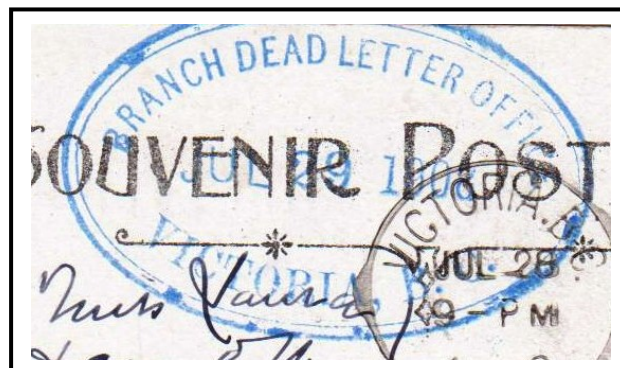


Mailed at Victoria on July 28 1908 with correct postage, the stamp was apparently missing when this card arrived at the post office. In compliance with regulations, it could not move forward and was sent to the Dead Letter Office for processing. No instructional marking was appended.

The DLO postal clerk correctly noted that postage had been applied, writing Paid on the item before date stamping it and returning it to the regular mail stream for delivery. The significance of the red markings is unknown, but may represent a street address correction applied in Boston.

BRANCH DEAD LETTER OFFICE /  
VICTORIA, B.C.

JUL 29 1908



To be continued next issue...

**DEAD LETTER OFFICE  
SEP 4 1917  
VANCOUVER, CANADA.**

**New ERD Handstamp by Gary Steele**

*Three reported copies*



The attached post card shows a single oval Dead Letter Office handstamp. It is not a NEW handstamp, however, it is a new early date for this handstamp of which only 3 have been reported. Finding Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary and Edmonton DLO handstamps on the east coast is not the easiest of tasks.

There are 4 known type 2a (Single Oval handstamps) reported for Vancouver, three with distinctly different lettering and another with all mixed lettering that is significantly larger in both width and height. Proofed on December 12 1916 only nine months prior to this specimen, this is the only proof done of the four types.

The card bearing this marking was short-paid. Mailed at Vancouver on Aug 27 1917, it was handstamped RETURNED FOR WAR TAX. (Called a gateway marking) and sent to the nearest Dead Letter Office/Branch that being located in Vancouver on AUG 28. There it was imprinted with a file number 3452 and a form sent to the addressee asking for postage or payment for the shortfall. Once the DLO received the required payment from the addressee in Tacoma, Washington a 1 cent Admiral stamp was attached, and the RETURNED FOR WAR TAX handstamp was crossed out (note the File # should have been crossed out according to regulations). On Sept 4 1917, probably the same day, it was struck with the single oval DLO handstamp and sent through the postal system with another machine cancel SEP 4 1917.

Some people may be asking why there was not a doubling of the postage due fee. It appears the Dead Letter Office was not interested in collecting extra postage due, the DLO just wanted full payment to process another item stranded in the Canadian mail system due to lack of compliance with postal regulations.

## **Dead Letter Office Per Postmaster's Information Book 1940**

Continued...

Page 76.

### **Section 574. Making up Registered Special Returns. –**

- (1) Form 16 D.L. (g) is to be used for special returns of registered mail.
- (2) Particulars as to registration number, office of posting, to whom addressed, and reason for sending to District Dead Letter Office, are to be entered respecting each registered article.
- (3) Parcels or packages are to be indicated by the letter "P".
- (4) Form 16 D.L. (g) is to be plainly addressed, date stamped and forwarded by registered mail.
- (5) If the mail is too bulky for the envelope a parcel or bag (if necessary) should be made up.
- (6) All special registered returns must be forwarded to the District Dead Letter Office under registration.

### **Section 575. Articles found Loose in the mails. –**

Articles which having become detached from their covers are found loose in the mails and cannot be identified, and which are included in special returns to the District Dead Letter Office should be accompanied in each instance by the memorandum stating when and where found and any other particulars available.

### **Section 576. Correspondence. –**

When writing to a District Dead Letter Office on matters pertaining to dead letter work such correspondence is to be enclosed in envelope 4 D.L. (g).

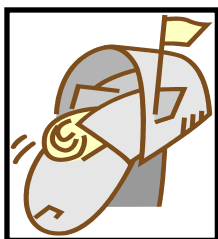
### **Section 577. Proper Forms to be Used. –**

The proper printed forms as indicated above must be used in making out dead letter or special returns, and care is to be taken to see that a supply of the necessary forms and envelopes is kept on hand.

\*\*\*\* This seems to be the end of info on the DLO in this Postmaster's information book. A comparison will have to be done on any changes between this earlier book and a later edition.



## 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:gary.steele@ns.sympatico.ca)