

THE STATE 3 BOBCAYGEON SQUARED CIRCLE POSTMARK STORY (Gary Arnold)

The existence of the State 3 cut-down Bobcaygeon squared circle hammer was first noted in the March 1961 "The Canadian Philatelist", followed by a report in the Rounding Up Squared Circle column in the March 1962 "BNA TOPICS" (excerpt below).

2. J. W. Travers has found BOBCAYGEON in the cut-down state known to us as sub-type 8. Schreiber, Ont., and Nanaimo, B.C., were reported by me about eleven years ago. You will find the interesting note of this latest member of the small "broken circle" group in *The Canadian Philatelist* for March, 1961.

We read there that several examples were found. It would be interesting to know how many.

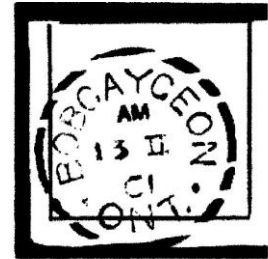
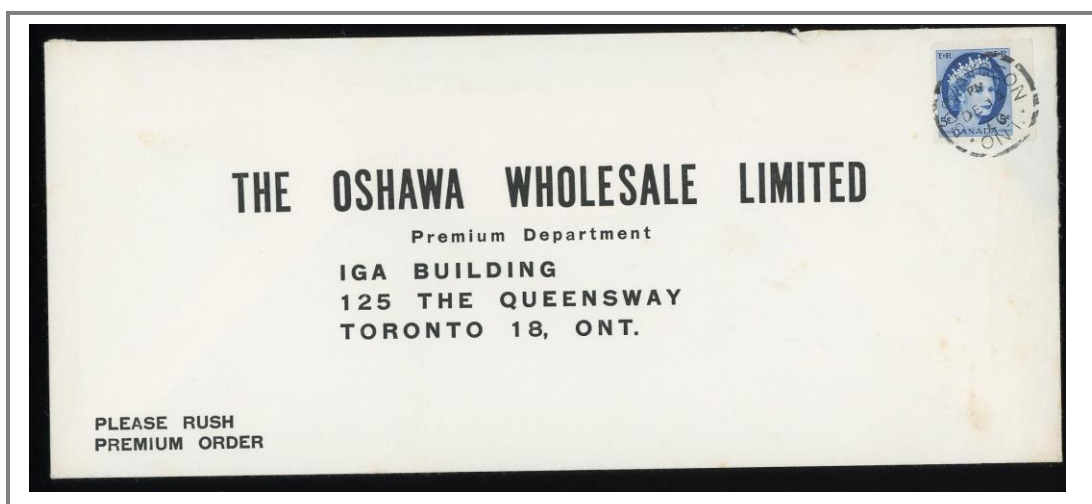


Fig. 1—Bobcaygeon 'Broken Circle'
Courtesy of J. W. Travers

The discovery of the State 3 Bobcaygeon squared circle was detailed by Graham Noble in his four-part series of articles on Bobcaygeon postal history published in BNA TOPICS in late 1979 and 1980.

"For a number of years, the late Jack Travers, a keen philatelist and one-time postmaster at Dundas and Thornhill, received bundles of commercial mail from a Toronto wholesaler. While searching throughout one such bundle for cancels in January 1961, he stumbled on a gold mine, "several" (his words) large covers bore cancels of what appeared to be a cut-down Bobcaygeon squared circle hammer. Elated with his find, which showed the hammer in use on December 10, 12 and 13, 1960, Travers wrote Dr. Alfred Whitehead with details of his discovery. Whitehead confirmed that the hammer was indeed the cut-down squared circle."



One of the three covers discovered by Jack Travers, dated PM/DE 13/60

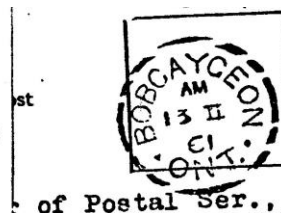
THE STATE 3 BOBCAYGEON SQUARED CIRCLE POSTMARK STORY (Continued)

Noble's January-February 1980 TOPICS article provides additional insight into the discovery of this cut-down hammer:

“At the same time, he wrote to Dr. Whitehead, Travers asked H.R. McKnight, Public Relations Officer for the Central Ontario Postal District to see what he could find out about the hammer from the postmaster at Bobcaygeon.”

A copy of the February 13, 1961 reply from Lloyd Beatty, Bobcaygeon postmaster, to H.R. McKnight was included in the August 1977 ANNEX issue (see below).

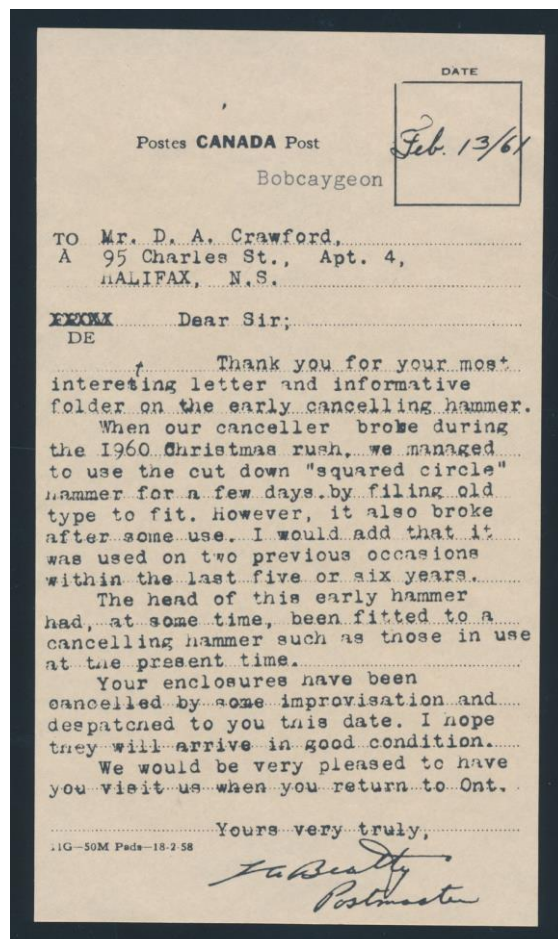
"To District Director of Postal Ser. Att: Mr. H. R. McKnight, Toronto 1 (sic) Dear Sir: This is in regard to your communication of Feb. 8th (file HRMcK:lw) in which you asked how often we used the early cancelling hammer that made the above impression. This "broken or squared circle" hammer was pressed into service for a few days about five years ago when we were waiting for a new canceller to replace a broken one. It was used last spring for one day while the regular cancelling hammer was being welded and again, for a few days, during the 1960 Christmas rush for the same reason. The broken circle canceller is not in its original form. The head from this hammer was fitted, at some time, to the style of hammer in use today and it is necessary to file old cancelling type to fit. Yours truly, T. A. Beatty" (signature, hard to decipher)



Continuing with excerpts from Noble's January-February 1980 TOPICS article:

“Meanwhile Alfred Whitehead had told Douglas Crawford, (then Assistant Manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia and a leading squared circle specialist) about the new discovery. Crawford wrote immediately to Beatty with details about the hammer's early use and requested additional data on its revival. At the same time, he enclosed two covers franked with a total of six 3c Jubilee stamps for favour cancels.” (One cover with pair and the second with four stamps).

Beatty replied to Crawford the same day as his letter to McKnight (at right), repeating the details of the hammer's use and adding that the squared circle hammer had broken after a few days use in December 1960. Crawford's covers were returned by regular mail having been cancelled "by some improvisation".



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Upon receiving Postmaster Lloyd Beatty's initial response, Crawford wrote to Beatty requesting a loan of the hammer for restoration and photographing purposes. Ultimately the request was denied by the Director of Operations, Procedures and Examination Division of the Philatelic Division in Ottawa. Ottawa requested that the hammer be withdrawn immediately and returned to the District Office in Toronto. Several days later, Beatty complied with the request: "***The above stated hammer is enclosed in accordance with your instructions of March 8th***".

The Timing and Basis for the Modification of the State 2 Hammer

In the January-February 1980 TOPICS article, Graham Noble provided the following second-hand description of the basis for and the timing of the modification of the Bobcaygeon State 2 squared circle hammer to the cut-down State 3 version (related to Noble by local Bobcaygeon historian Harry Van Ourdenaren who interviewed former Postmaster Beatty and the widow of former postmaster William Davis, Beatty's predecessor)

"He (Harry Van Oudenaren) went on to say that in conversation with Mrs. E. Davis (widow and one-time assistant to the former postmaster who had died in January 1961, age 92), he learned that the Department had the head of this hammer cut or turned down to its present size a few years after her husband Wm. Davis took office (December 1, 1908). This work was done because some of the square corners were broken off."

The scenario provided by Mrs. Davis appears to be reasonable recognizing the latest reported date of use of the State 2 hammer is January 20, 1909.

Regarding the possibility that the Department accomplished the modification, as stated by Mrs. Davis, Noble offered a different scenario.

"Mrs. Davis suggested that the hammer had been filed down by the Department a few years later. This is possible although the Post Office would likely have issued a replacement rather than taking the trouble of a repair. Probably the job was done locally and the hammer kept in reserve. Sometime in the 1940's, when the modern style hammer handles came into use, Davis requisitioned one and fashioned the head of the cut-down squared circle onto the new handle."

An Interesting New Find

For sixty (60) years after the 1961 discovery of the State 3 postmark by Jack Travers, it was thought that the hammer's commercial use was limited to a few days in the late 1950's (unconfirmed), one day in the spring 1960 (also unconfirmed) and a 10-day period in December 1960 during the Christmas rush.



In early 2021, this view changed. A March 2021 online auction listed a postcard with a strike of the cut down Bobcaygeon dated -/NO 19/20 on a postcard (above). This is the first known commercial use of the postmark outside the above noted periods in 1952 and 1960.

The 1920 Admiral strike adds to the list of squared circle postmarks used in the Admiral period, bringing the total to 28. This 1920 Admiral period strike appears to confirm the approximate timing of the State 2 hammer's modification as referenced in the above discussions.

THE STATE 3 BOBCAYGEON SQUARED CIRCLE POSTMARK STORY (Continued)

Census of Strikes of the State 3 Bobcaygeon Squared Circle Hammer

The first census of strikes was developed by Graham Noble and presented in the March-April 1980 issue of TOPICS; a total of 17 strikes on stamp, piece and cover were noted. A second census appears in the 1981 4th Edition Squared Circle Handbook; the roster indicates 11 strikes on cover and 11 strikes off cover and a corresponding Rarity Factor of 100.

The 5th Edition Handbook, published in 1995, and the new 6th Edition Handbook, released online in early 2020, also list 11 strikes on cover and 11 strikes off cover. The 5th Edition Handbook used the previous 4th Edition census information and the 6th Edition Handbook used the 5th Edition data.

The Table below was developed using information from the squared circle handbooks, auction catalogs and information provided by private collectors. The Table includes 10 strikes on stamps, 9 strikes on cover (including the new Admiral Period find) and 2 strikes of unknown format.

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	C	F	REFERENCE
1	-/NO 19/20	2 Cent Admiral Postcard	X		Private Collection
2	AM/26 JUN/59	Seaway Stamp FDC		X	Private Collection
3	PM/DE 8/60	4 Cent Wilding Postcard	X		Sparks #23 Lot 3291/ Henrok/Bennett Auction
4	PM/DE 9/60	Unknown Format			TOPICS Mar/Apr 1980
5	PM/DE 10/60	5 Cent Wilding #10 Cover	X		Travers/Sparks #23 Lot 3289
6	?/DE 11/60	Unknown Format			4 th Edition Handbook
7	PM/DE 12/60	5 Cent Wilding #10 Cover	X		Travers Find
8	PM/DE 13/60	5 Cent Wilding #10 Cover	X		Travers Find
9	PM/DE 13/60	2 Cent Wilding Stamp	X		Sparks #27 Lot 1199
10	PM/DE 13/60	5 Cent Wilding Stamp	X		Private Collection
11	AM/DE 14/60	Pair 1 Cent Wilding Cover	X		Private Collection
12	?/DE 16/60	2 Cent Wilding Stamp	X		Private Collection
13	?/DE 17/60	5 Cent Wilding Stamp	X		Sparks #23 Lot 3290
14	AM/13 II/61	Girl Guides Stamp on Piece		X	Sparks #27 Lot 1134
15	AM/13 II/61	3 Cent Jubilee Stamp		X	Sparks #27 Lot 1202
16	AM/13 II/61	3 Cent Jubilee Stamp		X	Culled from Crawford Cover
17	AM/13 II/61	3 Cent Jubilee Stamp		X	Culled from Crawford Cover
18	AM/13 II/61	3 Cent Jubilee Stamp		X	Culled from Crawford Cover
19	AM/13 II/61	Girl Guides Stamp on Cover		X	SC Handbook 6th Edition
20	AM/13 II/61	3 Cent Jubilee Pair on Cover		X	Sparks #23 Lot 3289
21	AM/13 II/61	On 5 Cent Royal Visit Stamp		X	Private Collection

(C represents commercial use; F represents favor strikes)

In regards to the December 11th date listed in the 4th Edition Handbook (No. 6 in above table), Graham Noble, in his March-April 1980 TOPICS article, states that December 11th was a Sunday; small post offices were typically not staffed or open on Sundays. Consequently, the validity of this report is questionable.

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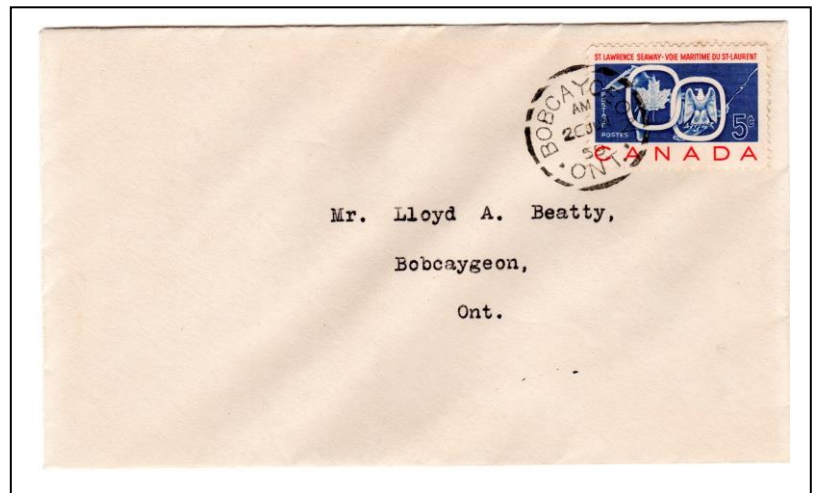
A Word on Favor Strikes

Favor strikes on the 3 Cent Jubilees and, presumably, the Girl Guide and Royal Visit issues, were produced by postmaster Lloyd Beatty for Douglas Crawford in February 1961; all strikes are dated AM/13 II/61. The four strikes on off-cover 3 Cent Jubilee stamps referenced in the Table (no.'s 15 through 18) were culled from a single cover prepared by Crawford.

The Girl Guides-franked cover (No. 19 in the Table above) was mailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia and was likely a Beatty-to-Crawford correspondence, recognizing that Douglas Crawford resided in Halifax at that time.

The assumption that the strikes on the 1960 5 Cent Girl Guide and the 5 Cent Royal Visit issues, dated AM/13 II/61, are favor strikes is supported by the fact that a new CDS hammer, requisitioned by Postmaster Lloyd Beatty to replace the broken CDS and State 3 hammers, was placed into service in mid-January 1961, a month prior to the creation of the February 1961 strikes.

Additionally, no other examples of the State 3 hammer dated in 1961 have been reported.



FDC Prepared by Postmaster Lloyd Beatty (No. 2 in Table)

A Case for Revising the Bobcaygeon State 3 Hammer's Rarity Factor

The listing in Appendix A, page 435, of the 1981 4th Edition Handbook includes strikes on the 3 Cent Jubilee issue (4 on stamps, 1 on cover) which are clearly favor strikes. It is reasonable to assume that favor strikes on the Girl Guide and Royal Visit issues and the reported strike dated AM/13 II/61 on the Wilding issue are also included in the Appendix A quantities.

Several other squared circle hammers are known to have favor strikes produced after their retirement, including Baie Verte, NB, Gore Bay, ONT and Nassagaweya, ONT. (More than 100 favor strikes of the Gore Bay hammer were produced by Mike Squirrell when he found the hammer at the Gore Bay post office). In these cases, it does not appear that favor strikes were included in the various handbook rosters and were not reflected in the assigned Rarity Factors.

The 4th Edition and subsequent handbooks utilized 22 examples to establish a Rarity Factor of 100 (21-24 examples) for Bobcaygeon State 3. If known/suspected favor strikes of the hammer are excluded from the roster count and the two unknown formats listed in the above Table are considered commercial use, the resulting total of 12 commercial strikes equates to a Rarity Factor of 130. Thoughts anyone?

