

A MOOSE JAW SQUARED CIRCLE UNOFFICIAL DUPLEX CANCEL by Brian Copeland

Postmarks are intended to obliterate (or cancel) a stamp so it cannot be re-used, and to show the date and origin of a cover. During the Victorian period, this was accomplished in various ways. In many towns, a CDS, split circle, or squared circle hammer was used to both cancel the stamp and date the cover. Sometimes one hammer was used as a dater and another (either a cork or grid cancel) was used to obliterate the stamp. A duplex hammer combined both: an obliterator (usually a grid cancel) was attached to a dater. Official duplex hammers were provided by the post office, but some postmasters produced their own by attaching a cork, wood or metal obliterator to an official CDS or split circle hammer.

Squared circle hammers were intended to be both an obliterator and a date stamp. The heavy bars in the squared circle postmark served as the obliterator. However, many postmasters apparently felt that it did not fully achieve this dual purpose and so we see different patterns of usage even for the same town over time. Some towns used two strikes of the squared circle – a free strike and another cancelling the stamp. Beaverton is an example of this, where one often sees the free strike on the lower left of the envelope. Some towns used a grid cancel to obliterate the stamp and a free strike of the squared circle to date the cover. There are no squared circle official duplex hammers.

To date, the only well-known candidate for an unofficial duplex is the QUE. & CAMP. M.C. LOCAL, No. 20, STATE 4 hammer, where the number 13 was attached to the bottom of the hammer. In this case the attachment is likely a clerk number. A database with listings of duplex hammers based on the catalogue produced by Stéphane Cloutier is available on the Postal History Society of Canada website.



Figure 1. Moose Jaw to Winnipeg (March 20, 1895)

Figures 1 (above) and 2 (on the following page) show examples of covers from February and March 1895 with strikes of what is probably an unofficial squared circle duplex hammer from Moose Jaw. I have included scans of 3 covers because to determine whether it is indeed an unofficial duplex, one needs to look at multiple examples to confirm that the position of the grid obliterator is the same. The unusual rectangular grid cancel adjacent to the squared circle strike is in the same place in each case.

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Figure 2. Moose Jaw to Winnipeg (Feb. 1 and Feb. 8, 1895).

These are the only Moose Jaw covers I have seen with this grid cancel. Figure 3 (below) shows a cover from late January 1895 that does not have the grid cancel. I would be interested in hearing from other collectors with strikes of the Moose Jaw squared circle from early to mid 1895 to try to determine how long this apparent unofficial duplex was used.

Moose Jaw is interesting in that at various times, it used the squared circle hammer in four of the different ways mentioned in the first two paragraphs of this article. In addition to the short-lived use of an unofficial squared circle duplex, it also used the squared circle hammer with one strike serving the dual purpose of being an obliterator and a dater. Figure 3 is one example; I have seen several others from 1893-1897 and from 1900.



Figure 3. Moose Jaw to Winnipeg (Jan. 21, 1895)

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There are also a number of cases where there is both a free strike of the squared circle to date the cover, and a strike on the stamp to cancel it. Figure 4 (below) is one example - I have seen at least half a dozen others from 1898 to early 1899.



Figure 4. Moose Jaw to London, Ont. (Jan. 7, 1899).

And finally, Figure 5 shows a cover where there is a squared circle free strike to date the cover and a separate grid cancel to obliterate the stamps.



Figure 5. Moose Jaw to St. John, N.B. (Oct. 9, 1899).

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Moose Jaw, ASSA eventually got an official duplex hammer. Figure 6 shows an example. It probably replaced the squared circle hammer. The latest reported date for the squared circle is April 12, 1900 and the earliest recorded date for the duplex hammer is April 24, 1900.

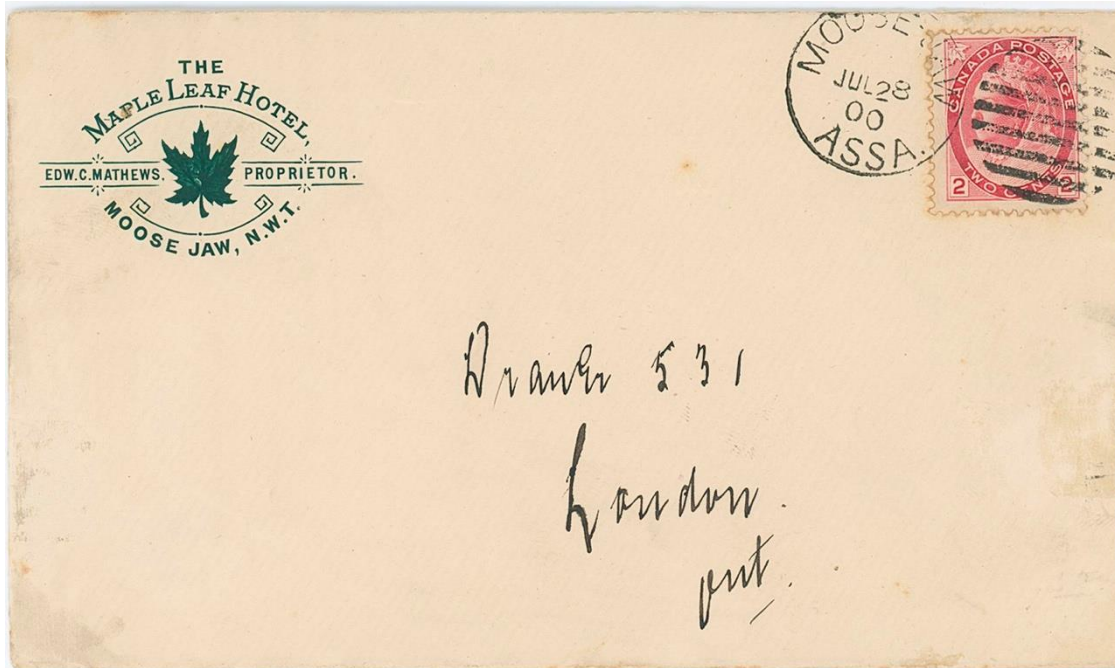
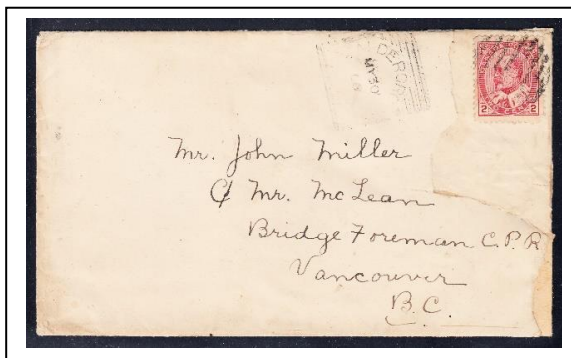
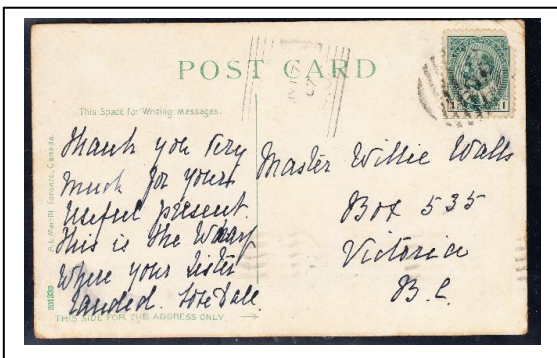


Figure 6. Moose Jaw to London, Ont. (July 28, 1900).

NEW REPORTS AND UPDATES – TYPE ONE

Aldergrove, BC: Aaron Gulliver provided information on four new reports for this hammer. All four strikes are typical of Aldergrove, light and partially struck. With these new reports, the rarity factor for Aldergrove drops from 70 to 65.

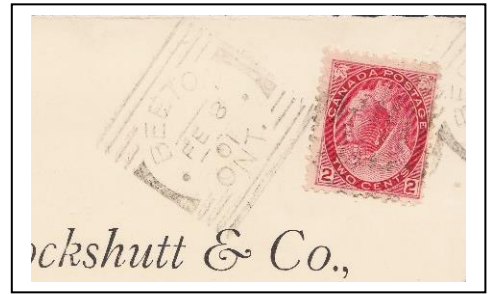
- -/JA 25/99; receiver on registered letter from the UK;
- -/MY 30/06; on 2 cent Edward post card (below, right)
- -/JY 17/07; on 1 cent Edward post card (below, left)
- -/DE 24/08; on 1 cent Edward post card; this date has been reported in the current Handbook but this is a new, separate example



NEW REPORTS AND UPDATES – TYPE ONE (Continued)

Beeton, ONT: Aaron also provided reports of three strikes of this hammer. With these additional reports, the next Handbook update will include an expanded page, similar to the Aldergrove listing of known strikes.

- -/OC28/98; on a 1 cent QV Leaf postal card;
- -/MR 26/00; on a 2 cent QV Numeral cover
- -/FE 8/01; on a 2 cent QV Numeral front (Right)



London East, ONT: Inverted day indicia :3”: strike on pair ½ cent Small Queens; dated -/NO 3/95.

NEW REPORTS AND UPDATES – NOVA SCOTIA and QUEBEC



Maccan, NS: First report on a 1 cent gov't envelope; strike dated -/MR 12/97

Pictou, N.S.: First reported strike on a 1 cent Letter card; strikes dated -/MR 27/00 (Left)

Iberville, Que: Additional borrowed three letter month indicia; strike on 1 cent Edward postcard dated -/JUN 15/05.

Riviere Du Loup Station, QUE : Additional inverted month indicia; strike on 2 cent QV Numeral dated -/12 OC/98

NEW REPORTS AND UPDATES – ONTARIO

Huntsville, ONT: New latest date for a blank time mark slot; strike dated -/MR 29/95.(Right)

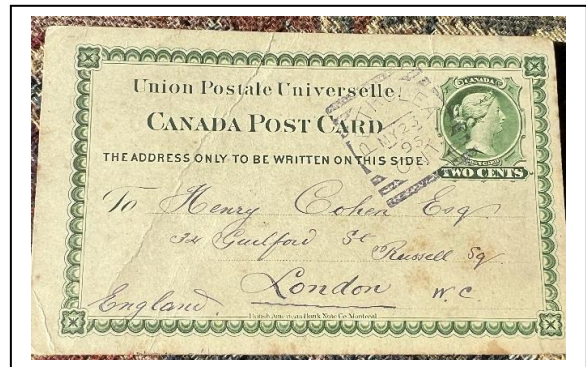
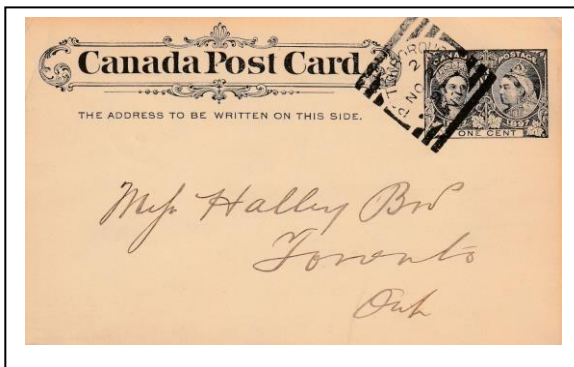
Marmora, ONT: Additional date of a single year date “4” for “94”; backstamp on cover -/NO 21/4

Paris, ONT: First reported strike on a 6 cent QV Numeral issue; strike dated AM/OC 27/98



Peterborough, ONT: First reported strike on a Jubilee post card; strike dated 2/NO 22/97 (Below, left)

Petrolea, ONT: First reported strike on a 2 cent Gov't postcard; strike is dated -/MY 23/95 (Below, right)



NEW REPORTS AND UPDATES – ONTARIO (Continued)

Port Perry, ONT: Day before month indicia arrangement; strike on 3 cent Small Queen dated -/01 AP/95. This is the first reported -/DD MM/YY date arrangement for this hammer. Additionally, there are numerous examples (at least 13) of normal date arrangements (-/MM DD/YY) in the initial period from 94/DE 7/- to -/AP 22/95.

St. Thomas, ONT: Three additional strikes with a blank time mark slot; -/AP 7/94 on a 3 cent Small Queen; -/AP 12/94 on a 3 cent Small Queen cover; -/AP 14/94 on a Gov't post card.

St. Thomas, ONT: First reported strike on a 20 cent Large Queen issue; strike on stamp dated PM/.MY 3/99. (Right)

St. Thomas, ONT: First reported strike on an 8 cent QV Numeral issue; partial strike dated PM/JY 2???



Sudbury, ONT: First reported strike on a 5 cent QV Leaf; strike dated -/MY 22/99.

REMEMBERING JOE SMITH

Joe Smith assumed the role of Chairman of the Squared Circle Study Group in September 1997 and over the ensuing 26 years was a consistent contributor of new reports and findings as well as attending, as often as possible, BNAPEX conventions and major shows in Canada and the United Kingdom. As outlined in the obituary below, his career requirements were often in conflict with scheduled shows and conventions. Many of us looked forward to his frequent emails on the state of politics and government in Canada and the United States. He will be missed.

JOSEPH (JOE) MARVIN SMITH (1948- 2023) - Joseph Marvin Smith of Hinton AB passed away on October 3, 2023. Joe was diagnosed with Influenza A after a trip to the UK and was in hospital on a ventilator for about 10 days. A few other health issues prevented his recovery.

He is survived by his twin brother Murray (Georgie), Joe's second wife Miriam, who he met while he was working in Cuba, his daughter Shannon and sons Vincent and Jeffrey from his first marriage and their families.

Joe was born in Toronto and then lived in Lynden, Ontario on his father's farm. He graduated from McMaster University with an engineering degree and had several months of advanced education in Texas to become a mud engineer (a specialist who analyzes on-site oil wells and the quality of the liquid draining from a developing well). His analysis provided the information needed to decide whether to keep drilling. In Canada, Joe worked on oil wells in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. He resided in Fort St. John, Rocky Mountain House and then Hinton. He once said he would never return to Ontario because he liked Alberta so much. He worked on a well in China for three months and worked on a well off the Newfoundland coast.

Joe formed award-winning exhibits related to the 1897 Jubilee issue, including the use of the P16 postal stationery card and Western Canada postmarks on Jubilee stamps. Joe was the chairman of the BNAPS squared circle study group, a position that he held for several years. He was a regular reporter for The Northerner. He attended the BNAPS convention when he was able to and regularly attended the CPSGB annual convention.

Source: Gray Scrimgeour, Murray Smith and Bill Pawluk. Published in the December 2023 PHSC Journal.