

QUEBEC "12 OCTOBR 1764" COVER

by J. J. Charron, BNAPS 1525

Recently, this writer became the proud owner of what I believe to be the oldest known B.N.A. cover, if not, one of the oldest, in private hands. In "THE CANADIAN PHILATELIST", page 256, No. 6, Vol. 14 (1963), Frank Campbell, well known postal historian, referring to this Quebec City marking, states:

"The first mark, writing in red ink, known to me is "Q3" on a letter to Montreal, October 12, 1764. The "3" is pennyweights of silver."

In "NOTES ON THE POSTAL HISTORY OF CANADA" by W. E. Durant Halliday, the author states that:

"The earliest postally marked cover is one in the Public Archives of Canada, dated August 26th, 1763".

The article goes on to say that:

"The earliest combined post office and rate mark, also in the Public Archives appears on a letter dated November 10, 1764..."

Consequently: (1) the cover, Fig. 1, is 13½ months later than the earliest (Aug.

26, 1763) B.N.A. cover known and which is in the Archives and (2) a month earlier than the earliest (Nov. 10, 1764) "combined post office and rate mark", also in the Archives, and until further finds are made, it is safe to presume that the "12 Octobr 1764" cover is the oldest known Quebec and/or B.N.A. cover in private collection.

The following is a transcript of the letter which is of interest, if only to discuss the day and the date on which the letter was written:

Mr. John Grant:

Quebec, Monday 12, Octobr 1764

I got here at 12 Oclok (sic) Saturday evening. Mr. Jacobs is gone up with a Mill Wright to examine the best place on Bourdon Isles for building a mill. I beg you'll inform me fully of his proceedings. Mr. Dobie carried a letter with him for me which he did not deliver when I met him at St. Sulpice. Get it and send it down first opportunity (sic). Do not neglect to send the apples and furs (sic) by first vessel



Fig.1

also all the ordonnances every occasion. I have ordered Jaumande (?) and Rousel to take paper which they are to send you. I have sold the gray horse open cariol (sic) and harness to Mr. (?). You'll not omitt (sic) sending him down as soon as possible and replace him by the brown horse at Sorrel (sic).

The goods ordered are shiping (sic). I have only 4 puncheons rum in place of 50 barrels the rest was sold ere I got down.

Yours all

(signed) William Grant

If you have opened the letter by Dobie keep the contents to yourself. W.G.

Octobr 1764" (Old Style) was the same as Monday, Oct. 22nd 1764 (New Style). I have again discarded this second solution since in 1752, the Old Style calendar was 11 days late on the New Style. (Encyc. Britannica — "Calendar").

(3) Finally, the more acceptable solution is that Grant must have confused the date of the month, mistakenly thinking it was the 12th instead of the 15th of October, which, of course, was a Monday.

Should any reader have a more plausible solution to this day-date problem, I would be very grateful to hear from you.



FIG. 2

Upon checking several sources, it has been definitely established that "12 Octobr 1764" fell on a Friday and not on a "Monday", as clearly indicated in Fig. 2. The solution to this enigma is to be found in either of the three following hypotheses:

(1) "William Grant" confused Monday for Friday. This hypothesis I discarded since it is highly improbable that Grant would let a Sunday, a day of rest, go by unnoticed. Furthermore, he says he "got here 12 Oclok Saturday evening", presumably, he wrote the letter two days after his arrival in Quebec.

(2) The second hypothesis rests on the fact that the persons involved being Scottish and presumably Presbyterian, still adhered to the Old Style calendar, which, in 1764, was at least ten days late on the New Style or Gregorian calendar. The latter had been in use generally in Continental Europe since the 16th Century, however, it is only by an Act of 1751 that the British Government converted to the New Style. The English waited two centuries for the change over, possibly because of their opposition to a papal bull, dated March 1, 1582, annulling ten days. The Scots, again I presume, delayed converting to the New Style since it was an English and Anglican decree (Act). If the ten days are added to "12 Octobr 1764", the date Oct. 22nd, 1764 falls equally on a Monday. Therefore, "Monday 12

Concerning some of the persons mentioned in this letter, a short biography may be of interest:

John Grant: of Montreal was apparently a brother of William Grant of St. Roch, near Quebec. He appears to have come to Canada as early as 1764; and he married before 1774 Anne Freeman, the illegitimate daughter of Richard Dobie. By her, he had at least five daughters, one of whom, Ann married Samuel Gerrard and another Elizabeth, married James Finlay Jr. in 1798. From 1779 to 1785, John Grant was engaged in company with Gabriel Cotté and Maurice Blondeau, in trading to Lake Superior, but in 1798 he is described as "at present absent from this province". He died in 1809, and his will is in the Montreal Court House. (Documents relating to the North West Company — The Champlain Society, 1934).

William Grant: of St. Roch, merchant, was born in Scotland in 1741, and came to Canada in 1763, an agent of the London firm of Robert Grant and Co., which had engaged in the trade with Canada. In 1763, he purchased from the Marquis de Vaudreuil a grant of the fur-trading rights in La Baye, Lake Michigan; but this grant was voided, and William Grant appears to have taken no direct part subsequently in the fur-trade. But most of the Grants who embarked in the fur-trade appear to have



FIG. 3

been related to him, though the exact relationship is difficult to determine. He himself concentrated his energies about Quebec and the Lower St. Lawrence. In 1770, he married the widow of Charles Jacques Le Moyne, third Baron of Longueuil; and his nephew, Capt. David Alexander Grant, married her daughter who was heiress to the title. In 1777, William Grant was appointed Deputy Receiver-General of Quebec; and in 1778, he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council of the Province. In 1784, he was relieved of his duties as Deputy Receiver-General, because of serious deficiencies in his accounts; and he was not appointed to the Legislative Council of Lower Canada on its creation in 1791. From 1792 to his death, however, he represented the Upper Town of Quebec in

the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada. He purchased a large number of Seigneuries along the banks of the St. Lawrence and he had extensive interest in Quebec, near which, at St. Roch, he had a large house. But he evidently died insolvent, for after his death, his Seigneuries were put up to auction. He died at Quebec on October 5th, 1805. (William Grant, Nova Francia, 1927) (Essays in Canadian History, Toronto, 1939).

Richard Dobie: merchant, was born in Scotland about 1731, and came to Canada about 1772 (?). In 1885, he was described as "the principal merchant and inhabitant" of Montreal. He died in Montreal on March 25th, 1805. (R. Campbell, A History of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, St. Gabriel Street, Montreal, 1887).

FANCY CANCELLATIONS

Day & Smythies

Addenda and Corrigenda

Plate VI — 46 identified as Grimsby, Ont., 1883.

Plate VII — 65 identified as Callender, Ont., 1893.

#205—identified as St. Catharines, Ont., 1883.

#684—identified as River Bourgeois, N.S., 1883, not 683 as formerly noted.

#685—also occurs with red cancellation, 1882.

#749—Remarks — P.M. Jos. Whitford.

#753—Remarks — P.M. J. H. Wylie.

New Brunswick Numerals

A preconferation cover owned by Bill

Russell has come to light with #21 from Florenceville in 1866 also a large queen cover of April 3, 1868. Does this put a leak in Chadbourne's dike? (see Topics, April, 1959).

The following postconfederation changes have been seen:—

#6 Westmoreland Point, 1880, formerly Campbellton.

#14 Maugerville(pronounced Majorville) in 1897, formerly Gagetown.

#21 W.O. Victoria 1871 formerly Newcastle.

#27 Upper Sackville, 1890, formerly St. Andrews.

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