

POSTMARKS USED AT QUEBEC

1763 - 1851

Part 1 — Maritime Postmarks

by Guy des Rivieres

INTRODUCTION

Canada, under the French regime, had no formal postal service. Only after the end of military government which followed the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 10 February 1763, in response to strong demands from the citizenry, was an organized postal system put in place under the direction of Hugh Findlay, the first Postmaster in Canada.

The development of the system, covered in my *La Première Route Postale au Canada 1763-1851* (1), will not be discussed here. Rather, this article will discuss the postmarks used at Quebec in the period from the start of postal service until the beginning of the Province of Canada period, eighty-eight years later. As much of Quebec's history was tied to the sea, and because mail which arrived by ship normally received different treatment from mail which originated within Quebec, this article will be in two parts, the first

'SHIP' MARKS

ship

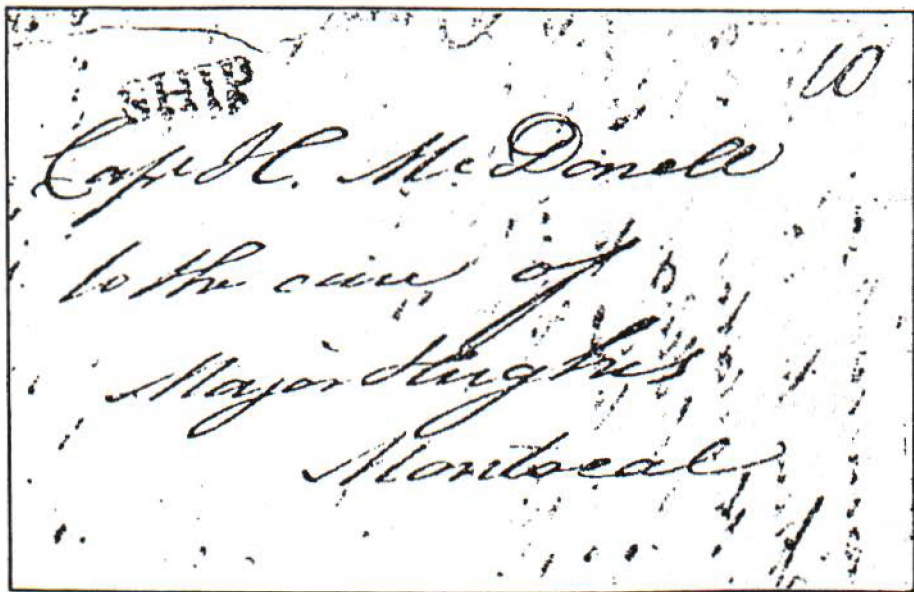
1. 1779

dealing solely with maritime postmarks.

Frank W. Campbell, in his work on the postal history of Canada, said that he saw in the archives the tiny 'Ship' mark illustrated in Fig. 1. The mark was so small that he almost did not see it on a letter dated 1779. There have been no other reports of this mark, which inevitably leads to the question, "Is it a mark applied at Quebec?" The fact that it has not been found on other letters from overseas in this period is cause to doubt its origin; it could have been applied in England,

SHIP

2. 1793-1801



3. Use of 'Ship' mark in 1793



4. 1801-1819



6. 1829-1831



5. 1815-1817



7. 1835-1843

or perhaps locally at Quebec, for it seems from the illustration to have been made with some skill.

While it may be possible to doubt that Quebec had a 'Ship' mark before 1793, there is no doubt that Quebec was endowed with a very conspicuous 'Ship' mark in 1793. Found almost exclusively on letters coming from overseas, this mark is shown in Fig. 2. The clerk would stamp the letter with this 'Ship' mark and direct it to its destination, noting on it the amount payable by the addressee according to the rates in force for the number of sheets and the distance it was to travel.

This procedure was not rigorously followed, and it is possible to find many letters from overseas in this period which do not carry a 'Ship' mark. Consequently, Quebec 'Ship' marks are quite rare.

The 'Ship' mark in Fig. 2 was used during the period of the Quebec 'Bishop' mark. To find the two marks on the same piece of correspondence would be a rare and beautiful philatelic discovery.

The letter in Fig. 3, from London, arrived at Quebec on 14 June 1793. There it was struck with the 'Ship' mark and rated 10 pence to be paid by the addressee in Montreal. The rate was made up of 9 pence for a distance of 100 to 200 miles, plus one penny for sea postage.

At the turn of the century, in 1801, Quebec received the first of four very pretty oval 'Ship' marks. All four featured the inscription 'Ship Letter' at the top of the oval, a crown in the center, and 'Quebec' at the bottom. These oval

marks, shown in Figs. 4-7 with their periods of use, are known until 1843.

In 1815 the rate for sea postage for mail coming from overseas was raised from one penny to 2½ pence. The letter in Fig. 8 shows not only the 'Ship Letter' marks, but also this increase. Dated at London on 18 April 1815, it arrived at Quebec where it received the 'Ship Letter' mark and was rated 2 Shillings 5½ pence, payable by the addressee, the triple rate for a letter from Quebec to Montreal (3 x 9 pence) plus the 2½ pence for sea postage.

All Quebec 'Ship' markings are hard to find; of them the one shown in Fig. 4 is more common than the others. The end of the use of 'Ship Letter' marks in 1843 brought the disappearance of another of the most beautiful Quebec postmarks.

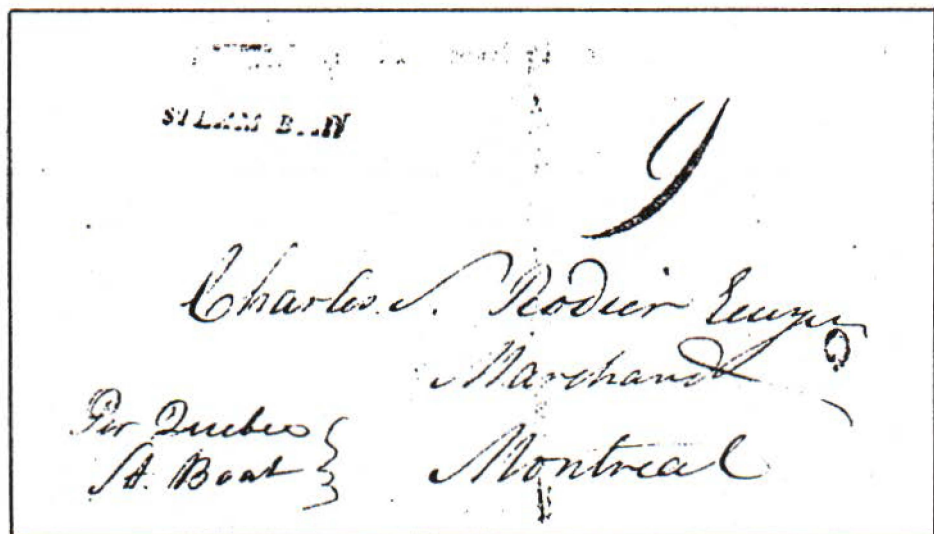
'STEAM BOAT' MARKS

Another type of maritime postmark was the 'Steam Boat' mark. In the fall of 1809 a steam boat passenger service between Quebec and Montreal was inaugurated on a trial basis. A boat named *Accommodation*, capable of transporting ten passengers, took 66 hours to make the journey (it stopped at night). It cost the equivalent of \$9.00 for the trip upriver from Quebec to Montreal, and \$8.00 for the return trip which was favoured by the current.

Thought to be the first steam boat in Canada, it was 75 feet long, with a paddlewheel on the side powered by a 6 horsepower steam engine, and belonged to John Molson of Montreal.



8. An 1815 Cover Showing Sea-Post Increase



9. Early 'Steam Boat' Mark on an 1817 Letter

(The steamboat shown in the cover illustration is the *Accommodation*, taken from a reproduction found in the Public Archives of Canada.) The service was quite successful for in 1818, less than ten years later, the Molson St. Lawrence Steam Boat Co. owned seven ships which made the run between Quebec and Montreal.

At the beginning mail was not officially transported by steam boat because the land service by the King's road was continued, in the summer to serve places not served by the boats, and in the winter when river navigation ceased. Then, because letters cost 9 pence from Quebec to Montreal, ship captains began to accept letters for transportation at a penny apiece.

The authorities became alarmed at this erosion of their revenue base and took steps to see that letters were properly taxed, but they met with little success because the prevailing rate was so high.



10. 1830-1839

Some letters did go through the Post Office. Around 1817 the 'Steam Boat' mark on the letter in Fig. 9 made its appearance. This letter, dated 1 October 1824, was addressed to Charles Rodier, a merchant who was the Mayor of Montreal from 1858 to 1861.

A boxed 'Steam Boat' mark, Fig. 10, was used sporadically between 1830 and 1839. This mark is very rarely seen.

To counter the illegal traffic, the authorities installed mail boxes on St. Lawrence River boats. The following notice appeared in newspapers in May 1821:

"The Post Office having placed a box for receiving letters aboard each of the steam boats in Lower Canada and Upper Canada, all letters must be given to the postmaster on arrival. Notice is given to passengers and to others on board that the Postmaster General of the King has given instructions to prosecute all persons who transport or deliver a letter to the prejudice of His Majesty's revenue."

The notice did not have the desired effect.

There exists in the Public Archives of Canada an 1840 correspondence entitled 'Illegal Conveyance of Letters by Steam Boat' (2) which dis-

cusses ways of stopping the illegal activity.

When the boat service was augmented by the addition of more modern ships and the observance of a more regular schedule, Postmaster General T. A. Stayner made arrangements with the owners to place a mail clerk aboard the boats. In the summer of 1841 this regular service was established, with a clerk aboard six days a week.

The *Quebec Gazette* of 24 May 1843 printed a notice giving a complete description of this service which began two years earlier:

POST OFFICE NOTICE

Commencing this day, Her Majesty's Mails will be conveyed between Montreal and Quebec, daily, (excepting Sunday), by the Government Mail Steamers.

These Vessels will start from Montreal at 6, and Quebec at 5 P.M., and will touch at Sorel, Port St. Francis, and Three Rivers.

To enable the Postmasters to close their Mails in proper season, the following Regulations with regard to the posting of letters (intended to go by the Steamers) will be observed: — At the Montreal Office — Letters for Quebec, William Henry, Berthier, Port St. Francis and Three Rivers, will be taken until half-past 5 o'clock. — Letters for the other places must be posted at five o'clock.

At the Quebec Office — Letters for Montreal, William Henry, Berthier, Port St. Francis and Three Rivers, will be taken until half-past 4 o'clock. — Letters for other places, including Upper Canada, the United States and the Eastern Townships must be posted by 4 o'clock.

BUT UNPAID letters for every destination will be received on board the Boat, by the Post Office Conductor in charge of the Mails, until the moment the Vessel leaves the Port.

A LAND MAIL three times a week, to leave Quebec and Montreal respectively during the Summer, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 6 o'clock, P.M. and arrive on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 8 o'clock, A.M. will serve those Offices on the North Shore which cannot be accommodated by the Steamboat arrangement.

*General Post Office,
Quebec, 8th May, 1843.*

The clerks aboard the steam boats were



11. 1841-1850



12. 1845-1854

given hammers to indicate the place of departure of letters. At Quebec they received two hammers, one, oval (Fig. 11) — the only one of this type used in Canada, was in use from 1841 to 1854; the other, circular (Fig. 12), was used from 1845 to 1854. The letter in Fig. 13 shows the circular mark, the least difficult of all Quebec maritime marks to find.

The oval mark, Fig. 11, was ordered in England in a letter from Stayner dated 22 March 1845 (3). In this letter he says that after the establishment of the steamboat service in 1841 he had supplied hammers made of copper which were unfortunately of poor quality, very unsatisfactory and already very worn. This explains why the oval mark is almost always of poor quality and hard to read or see.

With the arrival of the railway, much faster than the steam boats, maritime postmarks disappeared. The 'Steam Boat' mark of Quebec is

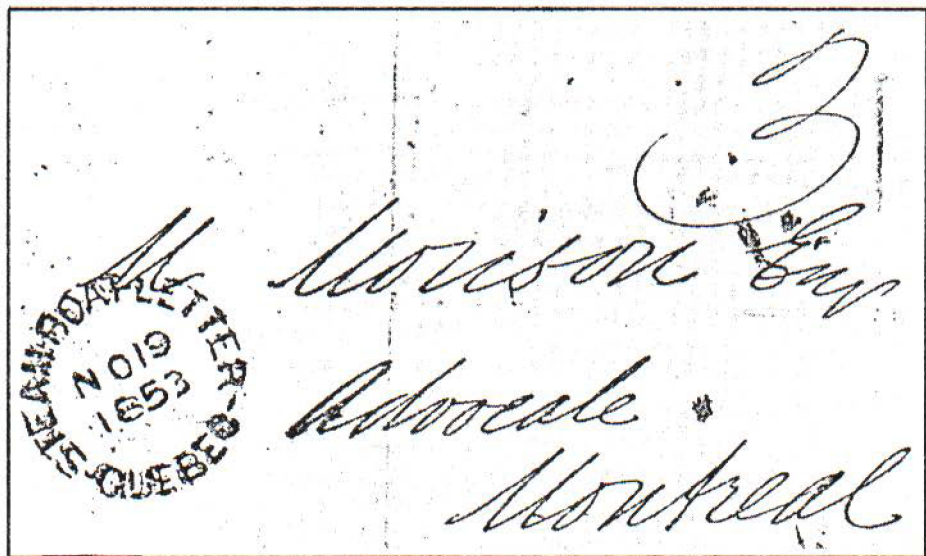
not known after 1854 and, as we have seen, the 'Ship Letter' mark had disappeared in 1843.

REFERENCES:

- 1) *La Premier Route Postale au Canada 1763-1851*, Guy des Rivieres, The Postal History Society of Quebec, 1981.
- 2) Public Archives of Canada, MC401 Vol. 2.
- 3) Public Archives of Canada, MC401 Vol. 32

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

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13. Late Use of the Circular 'Steam Boat' Mark

QUEBEC CITY POSTMARKS — 1763 to 1851

by Guy des Rivières

PART II

Under the French regime in Canada no official postal system existed. It was only after the treaty of Paris on 10 February 1763, with the end of the military administration and under pressure from the merchants, that an official postal system was organized under the direction of Hugh Finlay, the first deputy postmaster of Canada.

My monograph *La première route postale au Canada 1763-1851* covered this subject, so it will not be dealt with here.

It was during the summer of 1763 — the official date is imprecise — that, under the direction of Hugh Finlay, the post offices of Quebec, Three Rivers (Trois-Rivières) and Montreal were established. The oldest letter, with a manuscript mark 3 dwt (3 pennyweight, equal to 9 pence), is dated from Three Rivers, 25 August 1763, and is recorded in the Public Archives of Canada.

As these three post offices seem to have been opened at the same time, it could be assumed that they opened between the 10th of June, the date of the appointment of Finlay, and the 25th of August 1763. August is more likely.

From the beginning the Quebec post office did not receive any handstamp and the

first marks from Quebec are in manuscript, with only the rate in pennyweight preceded (or not) by the letter Q. Figure 1 shows the manuscript mark Q 8 dwt, the triple rate for 2 sheets being 8 pennyweight. These early pennyweight rated covers from Quebec are very rare.

In 1776 the Quebec post office started to use the *Bishop* mark, the first circular mark used in Canada. No other post office in Canada ever used such a mark (except Halifax, which was not part of Canada at that time). Quebec had to wait until 1778 to receive its first distinctive mark, a double circle with Quebec on the top and a triangle at the bottom. In the center, and sometimes aside, the *Bishop* mark was placed. Figure 2 shows the first distinctive Quebec mark on a letter dated 17 January 1783 to Montreal.

This mark was used from 1778 to 1790, although some letters during this period are seen with manuscript marks only. A modification was made in 1791, the triangle being replaced by the year date. It was modified once again in 1793, the double circle being enlarged and the year date replaced by Canada, thus becoming the first postmark to use the name 'Canada'. Finally, a last modification. In 1798

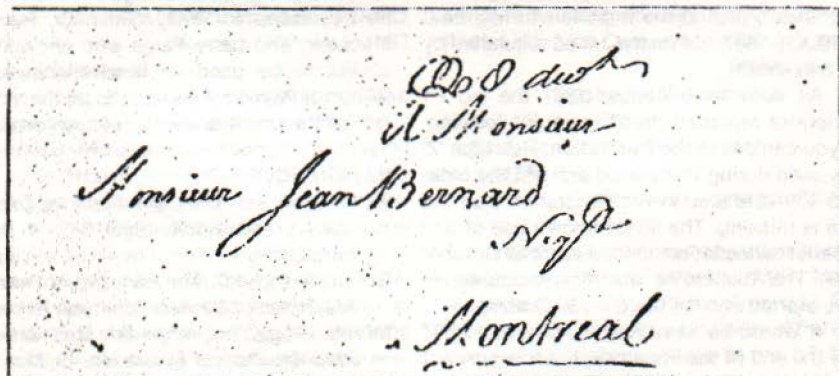


Figure 1



Figure 2

the year date was inserted between Quebec and Canada. This version was in use for only a short period in 1798 and 1799.

The middle of the year 1799 saw the end of the *Bishop* mark so characteristic of the Quebec post office. It lasted from 1778 to 1799, and was modified four times, but always the *Bishop* marks stayed in the center.

With the end of the *Bishop* mark the use of a straight line handstamp began. It seems

Quebec did receive earlier, probably around 1765, a straight line handstamp which was very rarely used, mostly with the *Bishop* mark. This Quebec straight line was somewhat similar to the straight line used by the post offices of Trois-Rivières, Berthier and Montréal.

The new hand stamp consisted of a line showing 'Quebec', and underneath, another line giving the complete date with the day, month and year. Figure 3 shows a Quebec

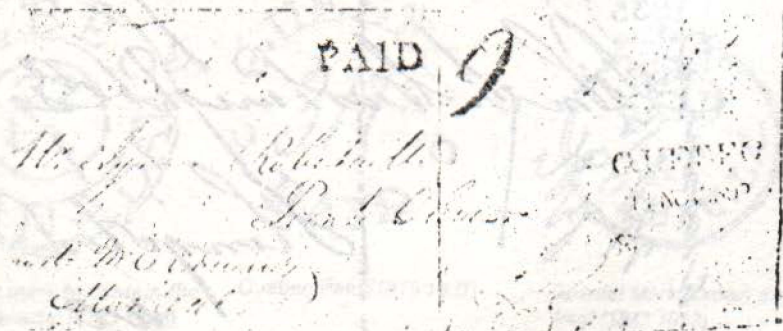




Figure 3





St. Lawrence

John U.C.

Figure 4

1932
one in Biddard-
and a lot of land in Brighton



Hon. W. B. Peltier
Quebec
W. B. Peltier

Figure 5


 1835

1/2
John C. Cartwright Esq.
Kingston
W.C.

Figure 6



Bishop Mark alone
(1776-1778)



Similar to the previous mark
but year added (1798-1799)



Double circle Type 1
(1831-1834)



First distinctive Quebec
Mark with room for the
Bishop Mark in the center
(1776-1791)

QUEBEC
3. SEP 1802

Straight line (1799-1808)



Double circle Type 2
(1834-1839)



The next mark replaced the
triangle with the year date
(1791-1792)



The Quebec 'Fleurion'
(1808-1830)



Double circle Type 3
(1839-1854)



The first mark to contain the
word 'Canada' (1793-1798)



Quebec Paid (1815-1831)



Special Mark, Crown and
Paid (1842-1852)

THE QUEBEC POSTMARKS 1763-1851

straight line. Use of this mark ended with the arrival in 1808 of a new circular handstamp called the *Fleuron*, because of the two fleurons at the bottom. At least two and possibly three, different handstamps with this mark were in use. The distance between the Q and C of Quebec varies between 32mm and 28mm, and the size of the fleurons also varies. This mark was used until 1830. Until 1826 the mark is seen almost constantly in black; afterwards it is seen in red as well.

In 1815 Quebec received a new handstamp on which the fleurons were replaced by the word Paid. This instrument was in use until 1831. From 1815 to 1831 Quebec had two different handstamps that were in use, but rarely were both used together. Figure 4 shows an example of both marks on the same letter, addressed from Quebec to York (Toronto) dated 28 June 1820.

In 1831 Quebec received another new handstamp. This device was similar to those ordered in 1829 and distributed to several offices in Lower Canada and Upper Canada, but Quebec's had type set for the date.

The arrival of this handstamp meant the end for Quebec of two distinctive and unique postmarks. The letter (Fig. 5) dated Quebec 11 April 1832 shows the use of the new mark.

This mark lasted till 1834, when it was replaced on the arrival of a double circle handstamp similar to those distributed in numerous post offices, but with the distinction of that

Quebec's was the only one without identification of province. This mark was used from 1834 to 1840. Figure 6 shows an example of this mark dated 9 September 1835.

Quebec received, in 1839, a broken circle handstamp similar to those distributed to more than three hundred post offices. These handstamps arrived in Halifax on 16 March 1839, and were immediately delivered to the post offices, including Quebec. This Quebec handstamp was slightly modified in 1842, the diameter being reduced from 30mm to 29mm, and finally to 28mm and the letters reduced from 4mm to 3.5mm. This mark, the most common of all Quebec postmarks of the period under study, was used until 1854.

During a short period in 1841 Quebec had a very unique triangular mark, the only such mark ever used in Canada. It was a double line triangle with the letter Q at the top and, below, the date in manuscript (Fig. 7). Very few examples of this mark have been seen, and the



Figure 7



Figure 8

reason for it is very puzzling. Why a mark in a totally new format with a manuscript date in a large office like Quebec (which had a type set dater way back)?

I would appreciate hearing from any collector who knows about this mark with, if possible, a photocopy of any letter bearing such a mark.

In early 1842 Quebec received a very nice handstamp consisting of a circle surmounted by a crown, with the words 'Paid Àt' in the middle, just above 'Quebec L.C.' This handstamp was made in England and, according to the proof book, sent on 2 January 1842. It was in

use until 1852 but having no dater, was not used frequently — mostly in conjunction with the regular postmark on mail to the United States, although single use has been seen on letters to the United States and England. Figure 8 shows usage, on 30 October 1850, of both marks on a letter to New York.

Between 1776 and 1851 Quebec received 12 different major handstamps, not counting variations and the triangle mark mentioned above, or the Maritime marks described in Part 1.

(This article is a slightly revised version of one which appeared in Philatelie Quebec in 1982.)

SKETCHes of BNAPSers

SKETCH No. 207

by Dr. R. V. C. Carr

DR. BRIAN PLAIN

Up in Kelowna, British Columbia there is a philatelist by the name of Dr. Brian Plain, who is interested in the Territorial material of Western Canada. A native of Calgary, he took his pre-medical training there, and received his M.D. at Edmonton. He has been a general practitioner since completing his residency. At this writing, he is President of the medical staff at the Kelowna Hospital. (The picture of our doctor was taken for a recent medical conference in Singapore.) He is married and has three children.

Besides belonging to local stamp groups, he is also a member of the R.P.S.C. and the P.H.S.C. His philatelic interests are many: Canadian Military Mail, Squared Circles, Alberta Law Stamps, and the Postal History of the Yukon and N.W.T. He has written many articles for *Post West* and *The PHSC Journal*. Brian first caught my notice with his interesting article on my Barnard's area — the 'BX' cancel. His largest work has been on the Prairie Grid System. He is currently preparing articles for the *PHSC JOURNAL* and *TOPICS* on Canadian Military Mail. (This issue — Ed.)

Dr. Plain had a childhood collection, started by a priest who gave him the stamps



from missionaries and the Vatican. A Canadian specialist took him in hand when in high school. Going to Kelowna, he was influenced by postal historians George Melvin and Jack St. Laurent, followed by a half-dozen or so others in his region.

We will be looking forward to more of his writings in *TOPICS*.

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