

THE IMPERIAL MACHINE CANCELLATIONS 1896 TO 1900

by Geoff. Newman
With Anatole Walker



Courtesy W. Gutzman

1. Type M1—The first machine cancellation, used on the second day the Imperial machine was in service.

A Note of Appreciation

As the Imperial cancelling machines were mainly used in Montreal, it was the desire of the author that this series of articles also be published by La Société d' Histoire Postale du Québec. Anatole Walker graciously agreed to translate the series into French so that this objective could be accomplished. The translation is not meant to be literal, rather it is a retelling of the same story, and for this reason the authorship of these articles is as given above.

In 1979 the author acquired a cover with a Bickerdike machine-type cancellation. This cover led to numerous questions, much reading, more research and the acquaintance of many knowledgeable philatelists. Early attempts to acquire an understanding of what the cancellation was about were directed at four philatelic friends, Wayne Curtis, Wally Gutzman, Ray McLean and Anatole Walker. To these four gentlemen, who handled my continuous badgering, prodding and questioning with courteous encouragement, my sincere appreciation is expressed.

In June 1981 the author was successful in forming a non-affiliated study group, which has since done much detailed work on the line-type machine cancellations and their relationship with the flag type machine cancellations. To this group of over twenty individuals must also be conveyed my thanks.

Introduction

Starting in March 1896 and continuing up to the present day, machines have been used for the cancelling of mail in Canada. Efforts have been made to record and document various parts of this story. Ed Richardson's *The Canadian Flag Cancellation Handbook 1896-1973* is probably the most widely known and respected work on the subject. Another important contribution, David Sessions' *The Early Rapid Cancellation Machines of Canada*, published in 1982, is an excellent effort at co-ordinating the various parts of this story, from 1896 up to and including the International cancelling machines which were introduced in 1902.

This series of articles will deal only with the first manufacturer's machines. The objective is



Courtesy R. McLean

2. Type F1—The first flag cancellation, used for only one day.

two-fold. The first aim is to retell the story of the Imperial Mail Marking machine cancellations, including new information which has come to light. This should bring interested collectors up to date. The second aim is to possibly attract others not previously interested in this area of philately. It is hoped that both the 'old-timers' and 'newly-interested' will feel free to correspond with the author so that their finds and information can be added to the total pool of knowledge.

It should be clearly understood that the author makes no pretense at having complete knowledge concerning machine cancellations. Future revelations will no doubt prove some conclusions reached and/or guesses made to be in error. The truth of this has already been proven to the author many times during the work of the study group mentioned above.

PART ONE

March 1896

A very informative letter concerning the initial use of a machine for cancelling mail has been preserved.(1)

POST OFFICE
MONTREAL,
March 11, 1896

Sir,-

An electrical stamping machine was delivered here at noon yesterday, and was in working order and in use at 4:30 yester-

day afternoon. Of course, our men will have to be trained, before we can speak of its usefulness. The man who feeds the machine faces up at the same time, that is the letters being higgledy-piggledy on the table, the operator picks them up in turn, with his left hand, and straightens them with his right hand, on their way to the machine. The machine is made to run fast enough for the most expert operator; it is of neat and simple construction, takes up very little space, and the sound of working it is not very loud, and much pleasanter to the ear than that of the mechanical stamp at present in use in this office. The die is all right—that is, the date stamp portion—but the lines are entirely too heavy. The ink has not time to dry, before the letters reach the hands of the Sorters. The Agent, however, has written to the manufacturers to send on (at their expense, of course) a new die, with wavy lines and light enough, so that the ink may dry quickly, and still make a good impression and a good obliteration. In a few weeks from now, when our men have been trained to the work, I shall take the liberty of writing you further on the subject.

Yours obediently,
(signed) J. L. Palmer

W. D. LeSueur, Esq.,
Secretary, P.O. Department,
Ottawa
P.S.

The envelope in which this letter is enclosed

RETURN IN 7 DAYS TO
JOHN FISHER, SON & CO.,
MONTREAL.



CANADA



H. A. Gayer & Co

Moncton

H.B.

Type L2

gives an impression of the new stamp as it now is.

This letter establishes the first use of a machine for the cancellation of mail in Canada. Figure 1 illustrates the cancellation used from the 10th until the 20th of March 1896.(2) This cancel is referred to as the first line type or M1. Only one copy dated 10 March 1896 has been reported. The latest known use is 20 March 21-0, and no examples dated between 15 and 18 March have been recorded. The operators of this first machine were obviously inexperienced; because of this, and the limited 11 day period of use, covers with this cancellation are very difficult to find.

The first machine-made flag cancellation, Type F1, is only known to have been used in Montreal for one day, 21 March 1896. This rare cancellation is thus the key to any flag enthusiast's collection. The obliterator (the flag), but not the hub (dater), was transferred to Ottawa. More on each of these in subsequent articles.

It should be noted that neither the first flag, nor the subsequent line type (M2), are known to have been used on 22 March 1896. Because 22 March 1896 was a Sunday, there

is a definite possibility that the machine was not used that day. As mentioned above, there are no reports of use on Sunday, 15 March. Type M2, however, is known to have been used on Sunday, 29 March.

The second line type (M2) was the replacement for the type M1 mentioned in Palmer's letter of 11 March. Note that the left hand ends of the wavy lines are uneven, as if trying to follow the hub, like M1 although not as pronounced. These uneven ends distinguish M2 from type M3, which came into use at the end of May 1896. Type M2 had two periods of use, the first being 23 March to 10 April, and the second 22 April to 5 June 1896. Type M2 cancellations, although not common, are easier to find than M1 and F1. This is only logical as their period of use was 64 days and, the machine operators having become more experienced in its use, more letters would go through the machine for cancellation.

Notes: (1) From Research Files, National Postal Museum, Ottawa.

(2) Unless otherwise noted, early, late or specific dates mentioned are from Line Cancel Study Group publications and/or *The Early Rapid Cancelling Machines in Canada* by David F. Sessions.

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THE IMPERIAL MACHINE CANCELLATIONS 1896 TO 1900

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Part Two—April 1896



Type F1 Ottawa

CORRECTION: Readers are asked to note a major error in the first installment of this series, in the March-April issue of TOPICS. The illustration on Page 19 belongs with the caption on Page 20. The illustration on Page 20 should go with the caption on Page 21, and that caption should read '3. Type M2' (not 'L2'). Finally, the illustration on Page 21 belongs with the caption on Page 19. Our sincere apologies to Geoff. Newman and Anatole Walker for this embarrassing mistake. —Ed.

The original Imperial machine in Montreal was on trial until the end of April 1896. No written references about the second machine sent to Ottawa in late March (or on April 1) have been found.

The first flag type (F1) obliterator, used in

Montreal only on 21 March 1896, was transferred to Ottawa. The illustration shows Ottawa usage, which has been recorded from as early as 1 April until 28 October 1897. (There was an interruption between 21 June 1897 and 6 August 1897, when the Jubilee flag was used, but more on this in a subsequent article.)

It appears that Ottawa used its Imperial machine only during heavy work load periods. It is believed this was done to minimize electric utility costs, and probably explains why machine-made cancellations from Ottawa are relatively scarcer than from Montreal.

The type M2 line obliterator appears to have been in continuous use in Montreal from 23 March until midnight 10 April. This obliterator may have also been used during the morning of



Type M2

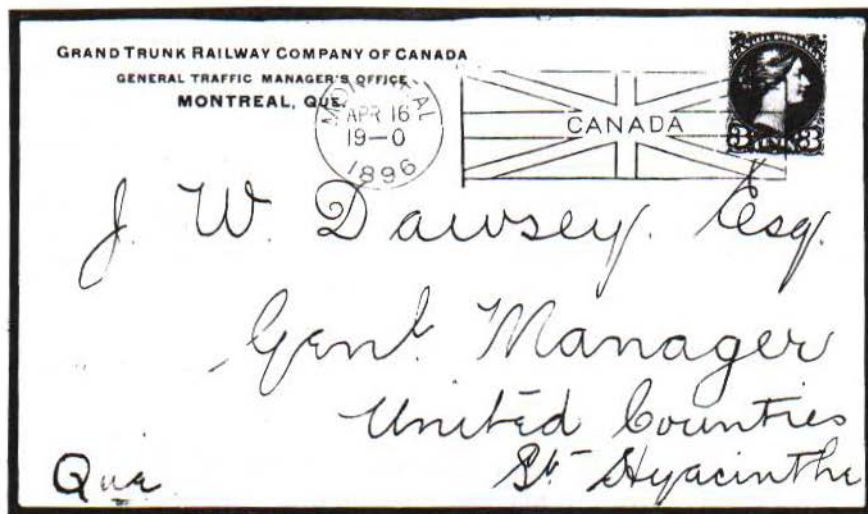
11 April.

The earliest recorded use of the 'Straight Jack' or Flag type F2 is 1400 hours, 11 April 1896. Use of this obliterator continued until at least 1000 hours on April 22. Both M2 and F2 are difficult cancellations to find on cover — with only 19 day and 12 day periods of use respectively, this is not surprising. It should be noted that the number of covers which have been reported indicate a higher rate of use of the Imperial machine during these periods than during the

period of use of type M1. This suggests that the operators were gaining experience in working the machine.

There exists a three page letter from Mr. Palmer, the Montreal postmaster, to W. D. LeSueur Esq., dated 17 March 1896, part of which is quoted below: (1)

"...I beg to say that, so far, the electrical stamping machine sent in here by the Imperial Mail Marking Machine Company of Boston & Montreal, is here only on trial



Type F2

(Courtesy of W. Gutzman)



Type M2 Returns

until the last day of April,...

...Of course, there would be less work for the machine on Sundays, but, leaving Sundays out, the cost, Mr. Young says, would not be more than 8 cents per day, and the machine runs throughout the twenty-four hours. It is in constant use, day and night... But what we would like to come at is this:—one machine would not be sufficient for this Office, during hours of pressure. We should require three, at least, which could be all used for face-stamping, or for back-stamping, as required. The back-stamping can be done by removing the lines, and this can be done almost in a moment. The present machine is a facer as well as a stamper, and can be operated by one man, who will do the facing and stamping. The number of letters that may be stamped by the machine depends on the operator, and a rapid operator can face and datestamp about 6000 an hour..."

The Mr. Young referred to was J. Brooks Young, agent for The Imperial Mail Marking Machine Company of Canada. Later Mr. Young was the general manager of The Canadian Postal

Supply Company Limited, which marketed the 'Bickerdike' Mail Marking Machine.

Palmer's letter establishes that the machine was on trial to the end of April and that it was or could be used for "back-stamping". The earliest recorded use of a machine cancellation as a receiving mark is April 11/20-0/1896 and, as suggested by Palmer's letter, it consists of the dater hub only. We suspect that earlier examples of these receiving marks are probably held, unrecognized as such, in some collections.

Between 1000 and 1400 on 22 April the obliterator was changed from the second flag back to the second line type. Use of M2 appears to have been continuous hereafter until 5 June 1896. It is guessed that there may be a two or three day break in use which will be mentioned in the next article.

The "trial until the last day of April" was successful, as five new machines came into use in Montreal by early June 1896. This will be the subject of the next article.

REFERENCES:

1. Research files, National Postal Museum, Ottawa.

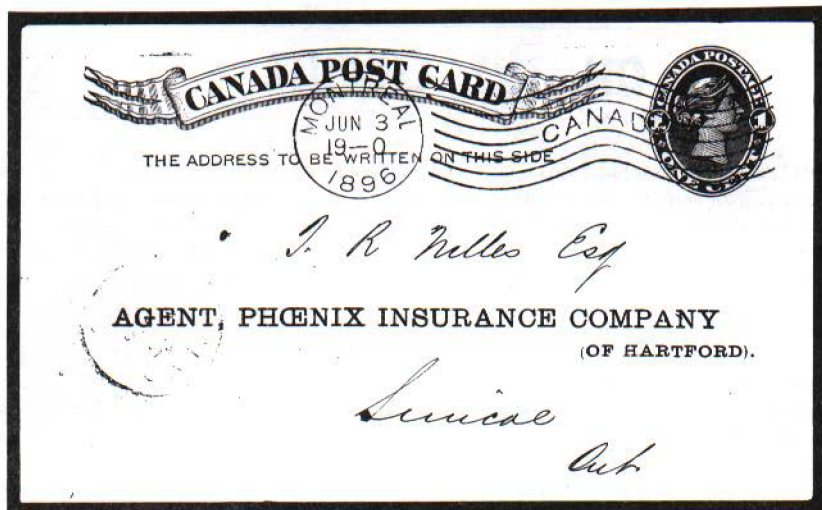
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THE IMPERIAL MACHINE CANCELLATIONS 1896 TO 1900

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Part Three — May and June 1896

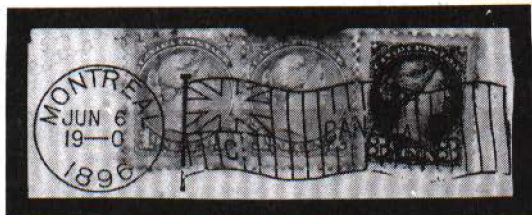


Type M2

As mentioned earlier, the original machine in Montreal was intended to be used on a trial basis until the end of April 1896. The M2 cancellation continued to be used through May and into June, with the latest recorded use being 5 June at 1700 hours. The trials were obviously successful because an additional five machines were delivered to Montreal. Four of these machines are known to have been used on 29

May and the fifth on 5 June.

The five new machines all used type M3 obliterations before converting to the Flag type F1 with die letters. All five dies of M3 can be separated, albeit with some difficulty, and have recently been assigned die letters. The die letters were assigned by comparing the dater hubs of the F1s with those of the M3s. Thus M3 die A and F1 die A have the same hub, M3 die B



Type F1 Die C



J. W. Dawsey Esq.

Grand Trunk Railway of Canada.

Chief Engineer's Office,

MONTREAL.

(R 21)

General Manager. U. C. Rly.

J. Hyacinthe

Type M3 Die D

and F1 die B have the same hub, and so on. There are slight differences in the obliterations, which are noticeable on careful inspection.

The common characteristic of all type M3 cancellations is clearly shown in the illustration. The left hand edges of the wavy lines, when joined together, form a straight line, unlike the M2 where the lines try to follow the hub.

Note the backward '3' in the illustration. Three copies with backward dates are known. All are die 'D'. Two are dated 3 June at 1900, and the other is dated 4 June at 1000. We have not seen any other reports of backward numerals between these two times. However, there is a report of Die D on 4 June at 1900 in which the 4 is correctly shown.

Postal stationery and R.P.O. specialists should note that the C.P.R. Monthly Statement of Earnings and Expenses was mailed on 4 June. We have seen three copies of this report, all

cancelled with M3 obliterations; reports on M3 indicia on these cards are welcome.

Anyone lucky enough to have more than one M3 should try to separate them by die. The first step would be to check the dater against F1 hubs of June 1896. A cautionary note—the hubs and obliterations were interchangeable, so there is no assurance that hubs and killers remained together for the entire period of use.

Needless to say, with such short periods of use the type M3 cancellations are very difficult to find. The chart below shows the dates of known usage, together with the change-over to the type F1 with die letters.

The chart also shows that the first type F1 with a die letter is die B recorded on 4 June. The other five dies now have an earliest known date of use of 6 June. The pattern shown in the chart, i.e. M3s to 5 June with F1s thereafter, makes us very curious about the F1 die

| Month | MAY | | | | | | | JUNE | | | | | | | | |
|----------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|---|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Date | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
| Day | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | |
| M3 die A | | | | L | L | | L | L | L | L | | F | | | | F1 die A |
| M3 die B | | | | L | L | | | L | | F | | | | | | F1 die B |
| M3 die C | | | | L | L | | | L | | L | L | F | | F | F | F1 die C |
| M3 die D | | | | L | L | | | L | L | L | | F | | F | | F1 die D |
| M3 die E | | | | | | | | | | | L | F | | F | | F1 die E |
| M2 | L | L | L | | | | L | | L | L | L | F | | | F | F1 die F |

L=Line Type F=Flag Type

B on 4 June, as we have never seen this particular cancellation. The use of the F1 flags with die letters in both Ottawa and Montreal continued, with only a few interesting interruptions, until June 1897.

As can be seen from the chart, type M3 dies A to D were used on both the 29th and 30th of May. No machine cancellations are known on Sunday, 31 May. We have checked back over all recorded dates of the Imperial cancels up to June 1896 and have found only one Sunday date, 29 March, as mentioned in Part one of this series. This of course suggests that the

machines were seldom used on Sundays.

Type M2 is not recorded on 29, 30 or 31 May and was possibly not used while the new machines were being 'broken in'. The only known copy of M3 die E was identified as such in 1982. Unrecognized by many for its uniqueness, the die E cover was on exhibit at Virginia Beach in October 1982.

Did you notice from the chart that M2 became F1 die F; the two obliterations sharing the same hub? But wait, that is another story, which will be told in the next article, entitled *The Saga of Short Foot (A Tale of Five Killers)*.

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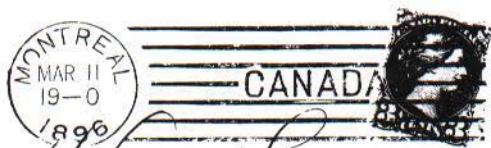
THE IMPERIAL MACHINE CANCELLATIONS 1896 TO 1900

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The Saga of Short Foot

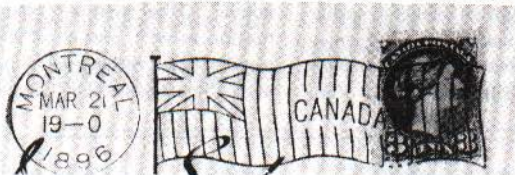
(A Tale of Five Killers by A. Kidder)

Ah! what tales could be told! If only the cancelling devices would talk, the most fascinating story of all would be the attempted murder of Hub One. How he lost part of his 'L' foot will probably always remain a mystery, but there is no doubt that the incident earned him the name of 'Short Foot'.



The first mug shot — Hub One and Black Bart

Back in the days when Palmer was the godfather in Montreal he imported, from the Boston mob, Hub One and Black Bart to carry out his contracts. As most people know, Black Bart did a messy job of killing, and when Bart was turned over to the authorities, it was expected he would be retired for 'life'. Court records of the period are sketchy, but it is believed he pleaded guilty to a manslaughter charge, which would explain why he was seen again within nine months. His subsequent return to Montreal, after Hub One had retired, means that he cannot be ruled out as a suspect.



Our Hero gets together with Cousin Flag

Palmer was very satisfied with the way Hub One was recording all the killings, so to Hub One fell the task of finding a new killer. He imported his cousin Flag One. After only four known killings, the Montreal mob became uneasy with Flag, who talked too much. They wisely shipped him to Ottawa, where an unscrupulous loudmouth would be lost in the crowd.



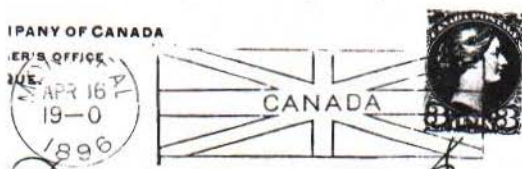
The Soon-to-be Victim and Wavy Line on an outing

Palmer is known to have personally brought the next killer, Wavy Line, to the Montreal scene. Wavy Line was subtler and quieter about the work he was doing, and all went well until the night of April 8-9. We may never discover what really happened, nor exactly when it happened, but we do know that Hub One recorded a killing at 10 a.m. on the 8th of April.



Short Foot arrives on the scene!

At 4 p.m. the next day he recorded another killing, and at this time most of his 'L' foot was missing!! As can be seen from the evidence we have, he cleverly tried to hide his injury. Did some member of Palmer's mob do the dirty deed, or was it a killer he worked with? We do know that Hub One forever after was called 'Short Foot'. Wavy Line must be considered a prime suspect, because he withdrew from the scene within 48 hours.



Short Foot meets Straight Jack

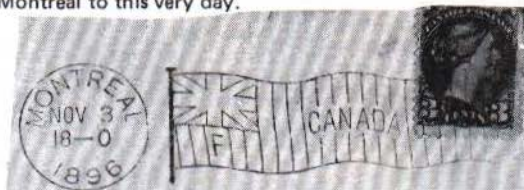
Straight Jack took over from Wavy Line on April 11. A Britisher such as Straight Jack would not last long in Montreal — it 'appears' he was employed only while an investigation into Short Foot's 'loss' was conducted. It is well known that Straight Jack left town around noon April 22, never to be heard from again.



Reunited with Wavy Line

With Straight Jack's departure, Short Foot again teamed up with Wavy Line. Now this would lead most people to believe that Wavy Line was 'not guilty' in the matter of Short Foot's 'loss', however subsequent events have left doubts in many peoples' minds.

Palmer, being very satisfied with how the mob's efficiency had improved business, arranged to import five more teams from the U.S.; in each case the killer turned out to be related to Wavy Line. Lingering doubts were just too much for Palmer and the hard working Short Foot, however. Within days Wavy and his five relatives were disposed of post haste, and the six Drapeau brothers moved in. The arrival in Montreal of Al, Ben, Cy, Dan, Ed and Fred has made the name Drapeau one to be reckoned with in Montreal to this very day.



Short Foot's last partner — Fred Drapeau

Our hero Short Foot teamed up with Fred, the fifth killer he worked with in his first four months; for the remainder of the year they quietly and efficiently went about their business.

Short Foot's deal with Palmer was scheduled to end at midnight 31 December 1896. He left early that day in order to attend a New Year's Eve Party, and then quietly retired from 'the business'. Thus ends the Saga of Short Foot and the five killers with whom he worked.

SO WHO DUNNIT?????????

Was it Black Bart while out on bail?? He had a reputation for making a mess of things. . . .

Or was it Flag One, taking his revenge for being sent to the boondocks?? . . .

Or was it the snaky Mr. Line trying to crawl to the top of the organization?? . . .

Or was it the elusive Englishman, who just happened to show up so soon after (?) the event?? . . .

Of course it was none of these. (The butler did it!!!!)



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Denomination: 32¢

Date of Issue: 18 June 1984

Design: Peter Dorn

Printer: British American Bank Note Co. Ltd.

Quantity: 20,000,000*

Dimensions: 30mm x 36mm (vertical)

Perforations: 13+

Gum Type: PVA

Paper Type: Coated one side, gravure (Harrison)

Printing Process: Steel engraving (one color)

with gravure (four colors)

Pane Layout: 50 stamps

Tagging: All general tagged

*Does not include printing overruns or stamps destroyed after withdrawal from sale (if any).

THE IMPERIAL MACHINE CANCELLATIONS 1896 TO 1900

by Geoff. Newman
With Anatole Walker

Part 5—July 1896 to May 1897



Courtesy Larry Paige

1 — Type F1 die K

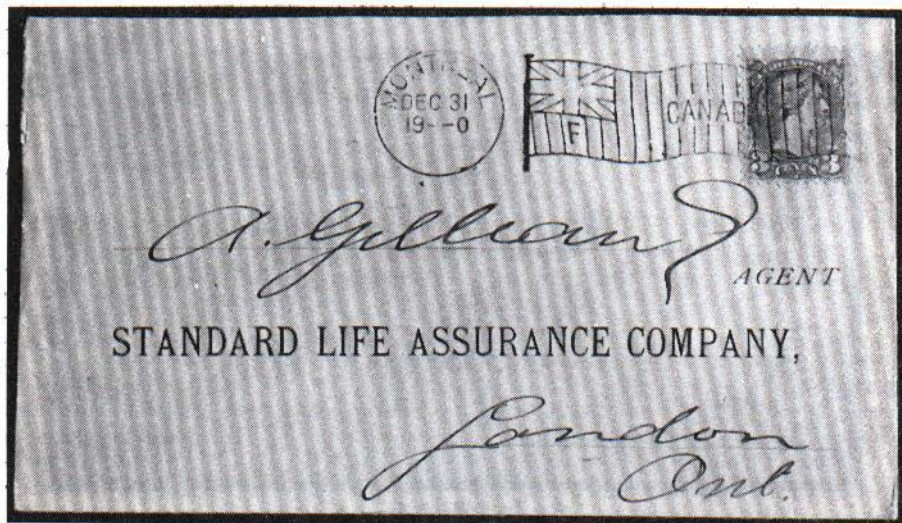
One can easily get the impression that, after the introduction of the six Montreal flag obliterator in June 1896, they remained in continuous use for more than a year thereafter. There were, however, some very interesting and curious exceptions.

During the seven day period 3 to 9 September 1896, a type F1 with die letter 'K' made its appearance. This mysterious obliterator leaves us with more questions than answers. It is generally assumed that it was a spare, to be used should any problems develop with the regular dies 'A' to 'F'.

Why the letter 'K' when you would expect 'G'? The best guess at a reply to this question starts with a letter to the G.P.O. in London, England, from J. Brooks Young (one time agent for the Imperials), which states that it had been estimated Montreal would need eight machines. Presumably, eight dies ('A' to 'H') could have been

prepared in anticipation of the order for Imperial machines. Letters 'I' and 'J' are not good letters to use for identification, mainly because of their similarity to each other and to the number 1, so the more distinctive 'K' could have been chosen for the spare obliterator. Then, when the order actually turned out to be for only six machines, the 'G' and 'H' were discarded. Thus letters 'A' to 'F' and 'K' were delivered with the order in early June, or so the speculation goes.

If F1 (K) was indeed a spare, which of the six regular killers did it replace? A careful study of all known Montreal flag cancels during this seven day period is required to answer this question. As we will see, two line type cancellations were used in early 1897, apparently as temporary replacements for regular flag obliterator, which raises the question as to why F1 (K) was not used again, if it was a spare? Type F1 die K remains an enigma, as well as being a difficult can-



Courtesy Larry Paige

2 — Type F1 die F

cellation to find.

With the coming of the new year (1897) we find that the hubs were used for eight days without year dates. The usually accepted reason for this is that procurement of the new dater hubs was delayed. Careful examination of Figure 2 adds a new twist to this supposition. Note that the hub is not 'Short Foot', which had been paired with F1 (F) since the latter's introduction the previous June.

The hubs had two large semi-circular pieces. The top half contained the city name and the bottom half the year date. A rectangular area was cut out of the center of both halves, leaving

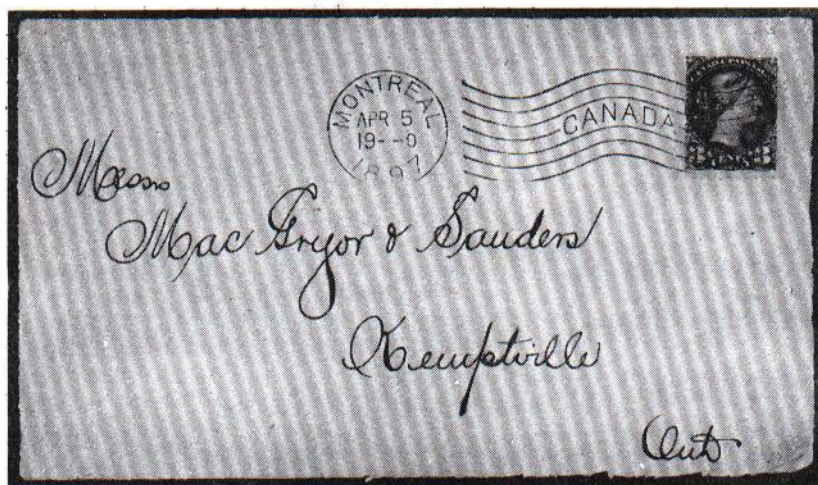
a space for the date and time marks.

The 'Montreal' shown in the Figure 2 is new, in that it was not known on any of Montreal's six machines before 31 December 1896. This suggests that new top halves were delivered before year-end, but they were not accompanied by the year date bottom halves. It is not clear how the missing year dates were produced. In order for the dater hubs to be used they had to have a bottom half. Whether the 1896 on the old hubs was filed down, or blank bottom halves were available is unknown.

The reappearance of the first machine cancellation, M1, on 30 January 1897 is surprising,



3 — Type M1-2



4 — Type M3 die G

in view of Postmaster Palmer's criticisms of it. Remember that, in theory at least, the Montreal office had as spare obliterations one M2, five M3s and F1 die K. There is no question that the dater hub is different from the 1896 one. There have been suggestions that the killer may be a different die as well, but in our opinion it is the same obliterator as used in March 1896.

This second period of use for M1 seems to be continuous from 30 January to 30 March 1897. With a 60 day period of use, M1-2 is more plentiful than the 1896 cancel, but it is by no means common.

The appearance of M3 die G in March 1897 is very curious, considering the comment above about possible spare killers on hand. The obliterator die is definitely different from the original five M3 dies, 'A' to 'E', used in May 1896. 'G' has been assigned to this die to guard against the possibility of another M3 die turning up with 'Short Foot' on an 1896 cover.

Very few copies of M3 (G) are known to be in the hands of collectors. It appears to have had two periods of use, between 10 and 18 March and again from 30 March to 6 April. The dater hub

used is different for each period. The first of these periods overlaps M1-2. The time mark of the earliest known use of M3 (G) on 30 March is later in the day than the last time mark known for M1-2 on 30 March. The dater hubs of M1-2 and M3 (G) second period appear to be the same.

The current guess is that M1-2 replaced F1 die F on 30 January and remained in use until 30 March. M1-2 was in turn replaced by M3 (G) until 6 April, when F1 (F) returned to service. It is also guessed that F1 die 'E' was withdrawn about 10 March and replaced with M3 (G) for about eight days. Needless to say M3 (G) is one of the more difficult Imperial Machine cancellations to find.

All great stories have sequels. Superman I begat Superman II, Star Wars begat The Empire Strikes Back and *The Saga of Short Foot* begat *Son of Short Foot*. Sometime around March or April 1897, the hub partner of F1 (E) broke his 'L toe'. And that's all there is to that story (sighs of relief everywhere). One does wonder, however, if this is in any way tied into the temporary use of the line type obliterations mentioned above.

SUPPORT TOPICS' ADVERTISERS

THE IMPERIAL MACHINE CANCELLATIONS 1896 TO 1900

by Geoff. Newman
With Anatole Walker

Part 6 — June to August 1897

We now come to what are generally agreed to be the most beautiful Canadian machine cancellations, the Jubilee flags.

In Montreal, Type F1 Flags with die letters 'A', 'E' and 'F' were taken out of service on 21 June 1897 and replaced with Imperial Jubilee flags (Type F4). Type F1 flags with die letters 'B', 'C' and 'D' continued to be used as late as 9 July (8 July for 'D'). On 10 July, the three remaining F1 flags were replaced by new Bickerdike machine cancellations, and the three Imperial Jubilee flags were withdrawn as well. At first glance everything appears to be straight forward, i.e., three Jubilee flags replaced three Type 1 flags. This, however, is not the case.

Four factors have contributed to creating confusion. First, 20 June was a Sunday. Second, the first day of issue of the Jubilee series of stamps was 19 June; this has led both Jubilee flag and stamp collectors to hunt for a 'dream' cover carrying a Jubilee stamp cancelled with the Jubilee flag on 19 June. Third, there do exist Jubilee flag cancellations dated 20 June; it is

our opinion that these were 'favour' covers made at a later date. Fourth, none of the Type 1 flags, dies 'A', 'E' or 'F' had been reported used later than 19 June. In fact, only die 'A' was known for that date; dies 'E' and 'F' had latest known dates of use of 17 and 18 June respectively.

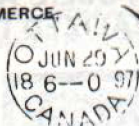
It is fascinating how things develop because, since December 1982, we have become aware of three Type 1 flag covers dated 21 June (Fig. 1). All are die 'E', all have 5 a.m. time marks, and all appear to be normal commercial usage. We are not aware of any *morning* Jubilee flags dated 21 June. Our own conclusions from all of this are that the three Imperial Jubilee flag dies arrived at the Montreal Post Office on 21 June, and during that day were put into service.

The one machine located in Ottawa also received a Jubilee flag obliterator. It is suggested that any search for the 'dream' cover mentioned above might be better directed towards Ottawa. The type F1 flag has a latest known usage of 11 June, while the type F4 is known as early as 5 a.m. on 21 June. It is within the realm of pos-



1. Type F1 with Hub 'X', 21 June 1897

IF NOT CALLED FOR IN FIVE DAYS
PLEASE RETURN TO
THE CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE
OTTAWA, ONT



MASSEY-HARRIS CO., TORONTO, ONT.

2. Type F4 with Hub 'Z'

sibility that the manufacturer of the obliterations may have sent the first die produced to Ottawa a day or two before shipping the other three to Montreal.

In Montreal, three different dater hubs were used with the Imperial Jubilee flags. These hubs are designated types 'X', 'Y' and 'Z'. Hub 'X', shown with the F1 flag of 21 June, is the usual style hub. Hub type 'Z', used both at Ottawa and at Montreal, is shown on the Ottawa cover. The Montreal Jubilee flag illustrated has Hub 'Y'. The difference between 'Y' and 'Z' is that the 7 in the year date is serified in 'Y', but is not in 'Z'.

The three Montreal Imperial Jubilee flag obliterations can easily be separated into die 1, 2 and 3 by counting the number of vertical lines in the left hand bottom furl: die 1 has five lines, including the closing one (Fig. 3); die 2 has six lines, and die 3 has seven lines.

The normal combination of hub and killer

is as follows: 'Y' with die 1, 'Z' with die 2 and 'X' with die 3. The only known exception to this occurs on June 25 when we have Hub 'X' with die 1. It is suggested that collectors should check any 25 June covers carefully, simply because if Hub 'X' is with die 1, which obliterator is with Hub 'Y'? There do exist covers with other combinations, some of which are in the possession of the Postal Museum; these, however, appear to be 'favour' covers.

As mentioned earlier the Montreal Imperial Jubilees were withdrawn on 10 July. In Ottawa, however, the Type F4 continued to be used at least until 6 August. There are some covers in existence with later dates, but they too are suspected of being favour covers. As early as 9 August, the old F1 obliterator returned to service in Ottawa. This will be discussed further in the next article, which deals with the last of the Imperials.



(Courtesy Larry Paige)

3. Type F4 with Hub 'Y'

THE IMPERIAL MACHINE CANCELLATIONS

by Geoff Newman
with Anatole Walker

Part 7 — The Last of the Imperials



Ottawa F1 with Hub Z

Post Office Department, Canada,
Chief Post Office Inspector's Office
Toronto, 30th May, 1897

My dear Secretary:-

In my report No. 697, of 30th March last, announcing that an arrangement had been completed with J. Brooks Young for supplying Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto offices with the Bickerdike Stamping Machines from 1st July next, it was suggested that the necessary measures be taken foreclosing the agreement, whatever it might be, with the American Postal Machine Co., who has had six machines in Montreal and one, I think, in Ottawa. With the particulars concerning the arrangement with that Company I am unacquainted; but I thought it advisable, in my report in question,

to suggest that whatever was necessary might be done to close matters with the American Postal Machine Company on 1st July next.

Yours very truly,

(signed M. Sweetnam)

W.D. Le Sueur, Esq.,
Sec'y Post Office Department
OTTAWA.

(National Archives of Canada)

There have long been questions about the association of the Imperial Mail Marking Machine Company and the American Postal Machine Company. The similarity of the actual Imperial machines to those of the A.P.M. Co. has led some researchers to suggest that the only difference between them was the manu-

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WHOLESALE DRUGGISTS,
MONTREAL.

IF NOT DELIVERED IN 5 DAYS.



R W Williams Esq
Three Rivers
2

Type M3 die H

facturer's name plate affixed thereto. However, until the above letter came to light, there was no documentary evidence concerning their association. We are reluctant to accept Sweetnam's comments, in the above letter, which imply that the I.M.M. Co. was a subsidiary or associated company of A.P.M. Co. One of the co-patent holders of the machine was Martin Van Buren Etheridge, who was associated with the American Postal Machine Co. until late 1895 or early 1896. He left that company, taking with him ownership of some 42 mail marking machines located in Boston and Chicago. It is speculated that the machines used in Canada were from Etheridge's Boston machines. They were possibly reconditioned and/or modified before being sent to Montreal and Ottawa.

As mentioned previously, the Bickerdike machines replaced the Imperials in Montreal on 10 July 1897, not on the 1st as requested by Mr. Sweetnam.

As early as 9 August 1897 the old F1 obliterator replaced the Ottawa Jubilee flag. As you can see in the illustration, Hub type 'Z' was used during this period and not the older Hub 'X'. Note also in the illustration that the date is missing. The latest known use of any Imperial cancellation, in Ottawa, is 28 October 1897. The Bickerdike machine is known to have started service there on 30 October.

It would be easy to conclude that 1897 was the end of the Imperials, but this was not the case. In 1899 and 1900 an improved version of the machine was tested in Montreal while

the six Bickerdikes were in service.

The trials are known to have continued at least from 10 March 1899 to 5 July 1900. The machine was apparently used continuously during this period. The line obliterator is similar to other type M3s, but the die is definitely different; the ends of the wavy lines are higher than all other M3 dies. It has been assigned the designation die H, and is the most readily available of all the Imperial line type cancellations.

Although the trial of the modified machine continued over fifteen months, it did not result in the acquisition by the Post Office of any additional Imperials.

And so we come to the end of the Imperial Cancellations in Canada. Originally envisaged as a three part article, the Imperial story is a tale that grew in the telling. Our thanks must be expressed to Wally Gutzman, Raymond MacLean and Larry Paige who allowed their covers to be used as illustrations, and to Robert J. Payne for comments on the association of the Imperial and American companies.

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