

The Pointe-à-Pic Squared Circle

by Fernand Bélanger

The post office at Pointe-à-Pic was opened on July 1, 1870¹. It was located near the St. Lawrence River, in the County of Charlevoix East, two miles from the Murray Bay post office.

The POINTE-A-PIC/QUE. squared circle hammer was proofed on July 21, 1893².



Hubert Warren, the postmaster at that time, died just two days later, on July 23. Although Mrs. Desirée Warren was not officially appointed as postmistress until October 1, 1893, the post office was not closed in the intervening period, during which

she presumably acted unofficially in that capacity. In fact, eight of the nine known strikes of the squared circle hammer fall in the period from August 13 to 24, 1893.

Now according to the following letter from the Post Office Inspector to the Postmaster General³, the Pointe-à-Pic post office was completely destroyed by fire on Sunday, September 2, 1894:

"Post Office Inspector's Office,
Quebec,
Sept. 4th, 1894

"Sir,

I beg to report that I was informed by telegram yesterday, from P.M. Pointe à Pic, that Post office was burned on Sunday afternoon last and that the Postmistress could save only the Registered and ordinary letters Blank Book of W.O. and stamps and Post office Money. All the other forms and the office dating stamp were destroyed.

The fire originated in one of the Hotels of the locality and destroyed altogether about eighteen other buildings.

I have the honour to be
Sir

Your obedient servant,
A. Bolduc
P.O. Inspr."



Note the use of the singular, "office dating stamp". Does this really imply that there was only one? Was it the squared circle hammer? If so, why have no strikes of it been reported for 1894? The squared circle hammers were reported to have been somewhat heavy and awkward to use; could it have been that Postmistress Warren simply did not like to use it? But if that were the case, there must have been some other dater in use in 1894. Broken circle hammers had been proofed on March 6, 1880 and November 7, 1888; do any of the readers have postmarks from Pointe-à-Pic of 1894?

Moffat and Hansen² report the existence of a cover bearing the POINTE-A-PIC squared circle with illegible date, back-stamped at Quebec on August 12, 1898. This is of course inconsistent with the destruction of the hammer in the fire of 1894. Could it be that the Quebec back-stamp is really of 1893 rather than 1898? This would of course make it consistent with the earliest usage, being one day before the currently-accepted earliest day of known usage.

Whatever the reason for the scarcity of the POINTE-A-PIC squared circle, it is interesting to note the proof strike shown below⁴. Just four days after the fire, a broken-circle hammer had been fabricated by Pritchard & Andrews, and was ready to go!



References

- ¹ Post office record card, Eastern Quebec Postal District
- ² Moffat, W. G. and G. Hansen. *The Squared Circle Postmarks of Canada*, British North America Philatelic Society, 1981
- ³ Public Archives of Canada, R.G. 3, Vol. 134, File 115, 1894
- ⁴ Proof Impression Books, Pritchard & Andrews. National Postal Museum