

The earliest Canadian duplex: a new discovery

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A CIRCULAR (shown in Figure 1) franked with a 1¢ Province of Canada stamp issued 1 July 1859 (Unitrade #14, Darnell #A12A) was recently purchased from Charles G Firby Auctions Ltd (11 October 2003, lot 479). It was posted 2 May 1860. The first author bought it because the circular was described as related to dentistry, a theme he collects (Figure 2).

A few weeks later, it was shown to a number of Ottawa collectors. The second author mentioned that the cancel was likely the earliest known Berri duplex, and therefore the earliest known use of a duplex in Canada (Figure 3). Currently the earliest recorded is also on a circular, mailed from Hamilton on 10 May 1860.

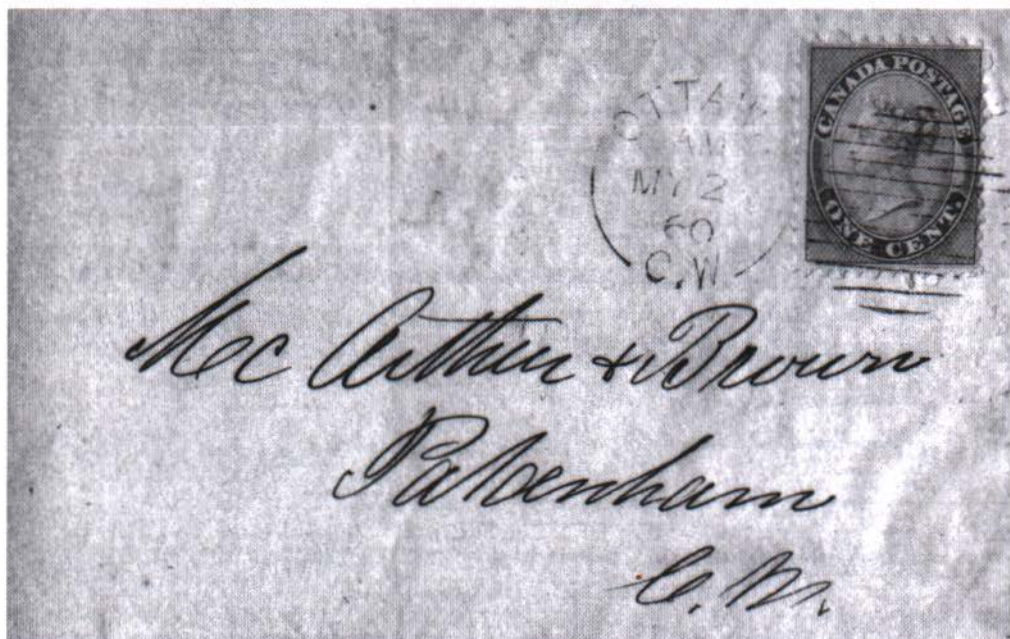


Figure 1. Circular with early Ottawa Berri duplex (2 May 1860)
On a circular from Ottawa to Pakenham, rate paid by the 1¢ “cents” issue.

Keywords & phrases: duplex, circular rate

DENTISTRY.

F. D. LAUGHLIN,
DENTIST,
Wellington Street, Ottawa,

In returning thanks to the Citizens of Ottawa and surrounding Townships for the favors of the last ten years, regrets to announce to his Friends in the Country, that he will not be able to attend the places he has formerly visited Professionally, it being necessary to attend constantly at his Office, and perform personally all Operations in Dentistry for those who may favour him with their patronage.

He requests attention to some Valuable Improvements in Fitting Artificial Teeth.

THE MOST PARTICULAR ATTENTION PAID TO
FILLING TEETH.

Teeth Cleansed and Polished with Neatness and Care. Irregularities adjusted.

Diseases of the Face and Gums successfully treated, and all Operations belonging to the Dental Practitioner performed in the most careful and substantial manner, and on the most reasonable terms.

Examinations of the Teeth carefully made, and Advice cheerfully given Gratis.

A Superior Quality of Tooth Powder and Tooth Wash
KEPT CONSTANTLY ON SALE.

Bell & Woodhouse, Printers, Central Ottawa.

Figure 2. Inside of circular

[Getting this to come out legibly was like pulling teeth—dh]

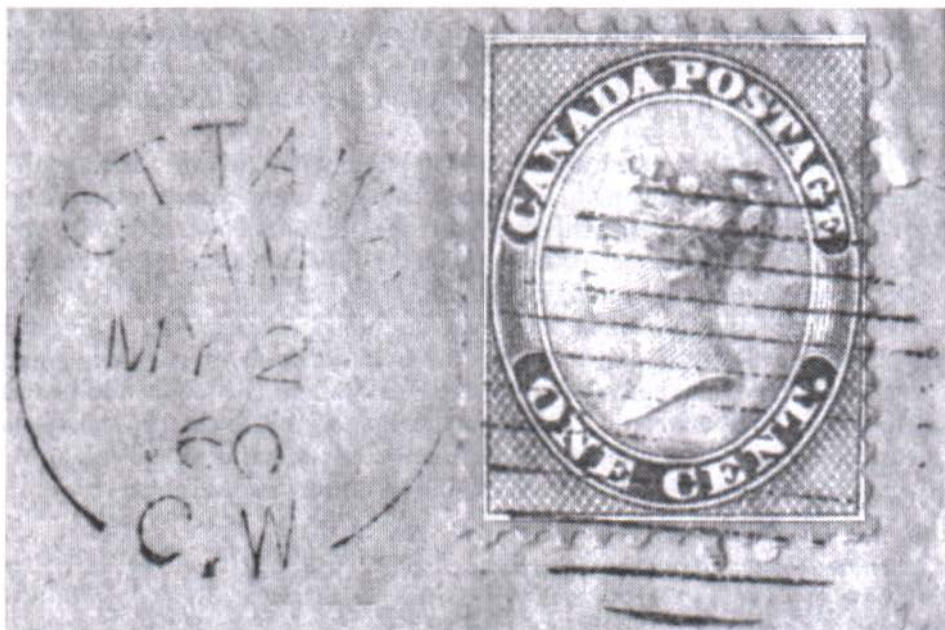


Figure 3. Close-up of duplex

The small top bar is barely visible.

The close-up shown in Figure 3 raises a number of questions regarding the current classification of the Ottawa Berri duplex in the *Catalogue of Canadian duplex cancellations*, (Robert A Lee, second edition, 1993). There are two different Berri duplexes listed for Ottawa. The first is identified as having 12 bars in the killer portion of the duplex and the other has 13 bars. Both are correctly listed as having changeable time marks. The earliest dates recorded are 25 July 1860 (12 bars) & 7 January 1861 (13 bars).



Figure 4. Clear 13 bar duplex

The 2 May example illustrated here definitely has a 13 bar killer. Could it possibly indicate that there was no 12 bar duplex issued to Ottawa? We

note that the first bar at the top is very short (Figure 4) and can easily not be impressed on some examples; this would give the impression that there are only 12 bars. This new early date is of a 13 bar killer. Does anyone have a *clear* strike of the 12 bar duplex?

The daters of the duplexes have 20.5 mm diameter (12 bars) and 21.5 mm diameter (13 bars) according to the duplex catalogue. The dater shown in Figure 3 measures 21 mm. All other Berri listings vary over 20–21.5 mm. Many factors distort the accuracy of such measurements on postmarks of that era. Poor or uneven inking, smudging, hammer deterioration, and different papers can contribute an error exceeding half a millimeter. This might also apply to another difference between the two Ottawa Berri duplexes listed in the catalogue, the space between dater and killer. The 12 bar duplex has a space of 1 mm between dater ring and killer, and the 13 bar duplex has a 1.5 mm spacing. Are there accurate measurements for these duplexes?

Readers' comments (and even those of the Editor) are welcome.

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