

A census of covers to California for the Decimal period by Luc Frève

In 1984, Charles Firby included a compilation of covers sent to California during the Decimal period in "The Postal Rates of Canada: 1851-1868, the Provincial Period – A recording". His work was subsequently updated by George Arfken and Arthur Leggett when they released in 1996 their book "Canada's Decimal Era – Postal Usage during the Decimal Era 1859-1868". This book has been the reference since then. However, more than 20 years have passed and new covers have been discovered. The time is now appropriate to issue a new census.

The census is divided in two tables matching the rates in effect during the Decimal Era: Table 1 lists covers recorded for the 15 cents period (July 1, 1859 – June 30, 1864) and Table 2 includes covers sent after the rate was reduced to 10 cents on July 1, 1864 until March 31, 1868. You will find under the A&L header the reference number given by Arfken and Leggett to each cover noted in their book. In order to aim for completeness, I am including stampless covers in this census. Covers were not always pictured in auction catalogs and, if they did, the writings cannot always be deciphered. So, if you have new information about the covers listed below, I would greatly appreciate if you could contact me so I can update the census.

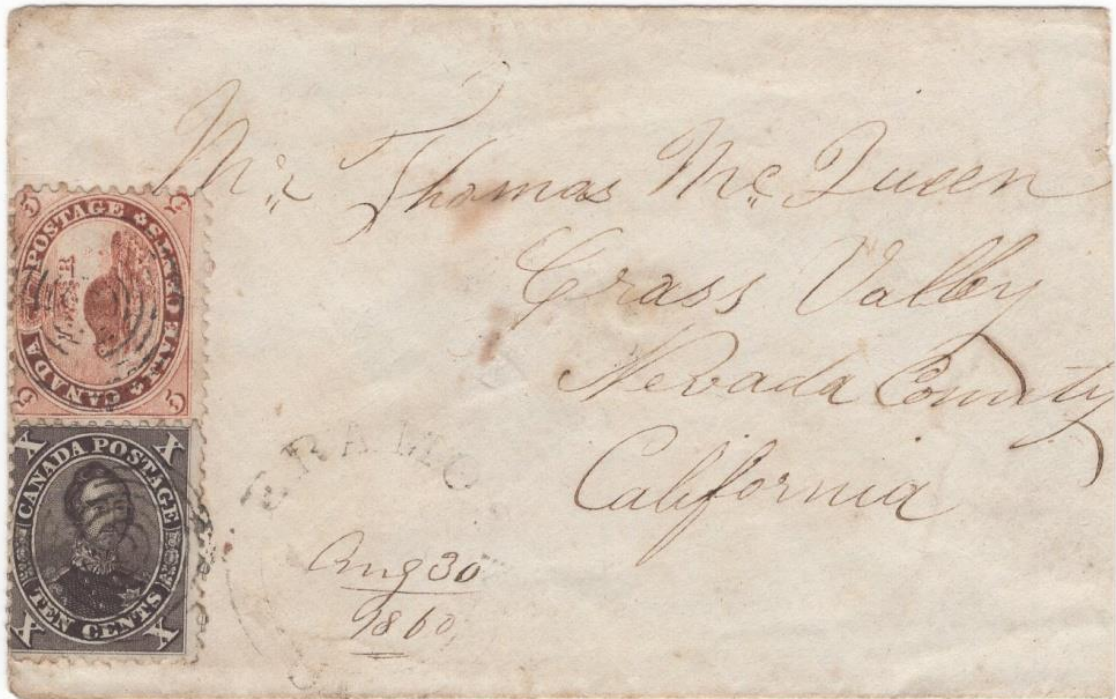


Figure 1. Cover sent from Eramosa, C.W on August 30, 1860 to Thomas McQueen in Grass Valley, Nevada Co., paid the required 15c postage to the West Coast with a 5c Beaver and a 10c black brown Prince Consort.

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Table 1. 15 cents covers to California

	A&L	Date	Franking	Origin	Destination	Addressee	Note
1	1	1859-10-17	5c X 3	Woodstock	San Francisco	Jakob Schrappner	
2	2	1859-12-30	5c X 3	Ingersoll	North San Juan	George Polley	
3	3	1860-03-21	10c + 5c	London	San Francisco	? ...an	
4	4	1860-05-21	5c X 3	Woodstock	Mendocino	Jakob Schrappner	
5		1860-06-14	5c X 3	Kirkwall	Grass Valley	Thomas McQueen	1A
6		1860-07-17	5c X 2 + 5EN	?	Grass Valley	Thomas McQueen	1B
7	5	1860-08-25	5c X 2 + 5EN	Kirkwall	Grass Valley fwd to Mountain Wells	Thomas McQueen	
8		1860-08-25	5c X 2 + 5EN	Kirkwall	Grass Valley fwd to Mountain Wells	Thomas McQueen	1A
9	6	1860-08-30	10c + 5c	Eramosa	Grass Valley	Thomas McQueen	
10		1860-09-06	5c X 3	Kirkwall	Grass Valley	Thomas McQueen	1A
11		1860-10-02	5c X 2 + 5EN	Kirkwall	Grass Valley	Thomas McQueen	
12		1860-10-16	5c X 2 + 5EN	Kirkwall	Grass Valley fwd to Mountain Wells	Thomas McQueen	1A
13		1860-10-25	5c X 3	?	Grass Valley fwd to Mountain Wells	Thomas McQueen	1C
14	7	1860-10-25	10c + 5c	?	Stockton	?	1D
15	8	1860-11-10	10c + 5c	London	San Francisco	James Pullman	
16		1861-01-17	5c X 3	?	Grass Valley	Thomas McQueen	1B
17		1861-08-03	15 ms	Montreal	San Francisco	C. Little	
18		1862-11-16	10c + 5c	Belleville	Stony Point	Arnold C. Cogle	
19		1863-01-06	15 ms	Montreal	Santa Rosa	Thomas Fraser	
20	9	1863-02-18	5c X 3	Waterloo	Bidwell's Bar	George W Miller	
21	10	1863-07-04	10c + 5c	Montreal	Stockton	Joseph Wallner (?)	
22	11	1863-08-10	10c + 5c	Brantford	San Francisco	W. W. Chipman	
23		1863-09-16	5c X 3	Oshawa	Marysville	John McIntosh	
24	12	1863-11-13	10c + 5c	Brantford	San Francisco	?	
25	13	1863-11-16	10c + 5c	Bellevue	Sonoma	?	
26	14	1863-12-07	10c + 5c	Brantford	San Francisco	W. W. Chipman	
27		1864-07-02	10c	Guelph	San Francisco	Daniel Day	
5EN: 5¢ Nesbitt postal stationary; ms: manuscript							

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Note 1A: According to Horace Harrison's notes, these four covers originated from Eramosa. However, they only bear a Kirkwall postmark. One of the cover was accompanied by a letter written in Eramosa. As we do not know if Harrison had access to the content of the other letters, we cannot assume that they all originated from Eramosa.

Note 1B: These covers probably originated in Kirkwall or Eramosa but the post office name is not visible on the covers, we can only read the date on the picture.

Note 1C: No postmark appears on the front of the cover. The lot description indicated a Brockton broken circle on the reverse.

Note 1D: Per Arfken & Legget, this cover was recorded by Firby but no picture has been located yet

Table 2. 10 cents covers to California

	A&L	Date	Franking	Origin	Destination	Addressee	Note
1		1864-07-07	10c hs	Montreal	Santa Rosa	Thomas or Julia Fraser	
2		1864-07-28	5c X 2	Napanee	San Francisco	Solomon W Pringle	
3	2	1864-08-08	10c	Napanee	San Francisco	?	2A
4	3	1864-08-30	10c	Napanee	San Francisco	Solomon W Pringle	
5		1864-10-01	10c hs	Toronto	San Francisco	?	2B
6	4	1864-10-26	5c X 2	Brantford	San Francisco	W. W. Chipman	
7		1864-10-28	10c	Guelph	San Francisco	Daniel Day	
8		1864-11-08	unpaid	Whitby	San Francisco fwd to Taylorsville	Arthur W. Keddie	
9		1865-06-08	unpaid	Whitby	San Francisco fwd to Taylorsville	Arthur W. Keddie	
10	5	1865-09-16	5c X 2	Picton	San Francisco	W. A. Werden?	
11	6	1865-10-24	5c X 2	Brantford	San Francisco	?	2B
12	7	1866-01-26	10c	Picton	San Francisco fwd to Oregon	Wm A Merden (or Sheridan?)	
13	8	1866-04-16	10c	Brantford	San Francisco	W. W. Chipman	
14	9	1866-08-15	5c X 2	Brantford	San Francisco	W. W. Chipman	
15	10	1866-09-11	5c X 2	Whitby	Crescent Mills	Arthur W. Keddie	
16		1867-??-??	?	?	Taylorsville fwd to Rich Bar	?	2B
17		1867-02-06	10c	Aurora	Campo Seco	George L. Hunt	
18		1867-02-20	10c hs	Newburgh	Grass Valley	William Delmage	
19		1867-03-05	10c hs	Aurora	Campo Seco	George L. Hunt	
20	11	1867-03-09	10c	Brookbury	Timbuctoo	?	

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	A&L	Date	Franking	Origin	Destination	Addressee	Note
21	12	1867-04-27	10c	Cumminsville	St. Louis	William R. Morgan	
22		1867-08-03	5c X 2	Hamilton	Napa City	Dr Noble Oliver	
23		1867-09-09	unpaid	Whitby	Greenville fwd to Yankee Hill	Arthur W. Keddie	
24	13	1867-09-17	10c	Aurora	Campo Seco	George L. Hunt	
25	14	1867-11-18	10c	Aurora	Campo Seco	George L. Hunt	
26	15	1867-12-05	5c X 2	Kettleby	Campo Seco	?	2A
27		1867-12-07	10c ms	Newburgh	Colfax	William Delmage	
28		1868-01-01	10c hs	Newburgh	Colfax	William Delmage	
29	16	1868-01-18	10c	Aurora	Campo Seco	George L. Hunt	
30	17	1868-01-27	5c X 2	St. Mary's	Mariposa	?	2A
31		1868-03-13	10c ms	Marlbank	Drytown	To the Postmaster	
32	18	1868-03-28	10c	Medina	?	?	2A
33		186?-02-29		Montreal	Coloma	G.M. Anderson	2C

hs: hand stamp; ms: manuscript

Note 2A: Per Arfken & Legget, this cover was recorded by Firby but no picture has been located yet

Note 2B: No picture provided in the auction catalog (or only partially pictured)

Note 2C: Using retro-reveal, the postmark appears to be 1865 or 1866.

I will now write a few words about some of the addressees listed in this census. Covers sent to Thomas McQueen in Grass Valley represent third of the covers recorded for the 15 cents era. However I will not discuss here these ten covers as they are the subject of an article by Ron Majors and Luc Frève in the recent issue of BNA Topics - Whole Number 569, 78(4) 46-51(2021). Instead, I will describe the other three large correspondences (W. Chipman, A. Keddie and G. Hunt) which are included in the 10 cents period, at the exception of two covers.



W.W. Chipman ca. 1850
(Alameda Museum)

The W. W. Chipman correspondence includes five covers sent between 1863 and 1866. This number could be expanded to seven, should the Brantford covers #24 from Table 1 and #11 from Table 2 turn out to also be addressed to him. William Worthington Chipman (1820-1873) was an attorney in law from San Francisco. He is known for being the co-founder of Amaleda (this city made the history when the first transcontinental train completed its trip by reaching its terminus in 1869). Thomas Botham (1819-1893) endorsed many of these covers. Mr Botham was a dry good merchant of Brantford and he became subsequently a broker. Since I have not found any family relationship between the two, I have to assume that Botham maintained a business relationship with Chipman. Unfortunately I have not found more information on this matter.

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Figure 2. Cover endorsed by Thomas Botham, mailed from Brantford, CW on October 26, 1864 to W.W. Chipman in San Francisco, paid with two 5c Beavers (courtesy of Ron Majors)



Figure 3. Cover sent unpaid from Whitby on November 8, 1864 addressed to Arthur W. Keddie in San Francisco, forwarded on December 8 to Taylorsville, Plumas Co. Rated 13c due by the recipient consisting of 10c for the U.S. West Coast plus an additional 3c for the forwarding